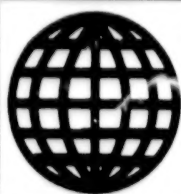


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16 APRIL 1992



**FOREIGN
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JPRS Report

Near East & South Asia

Near East & South Asia

JPRS-NEA-92-050

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Kurdish Party Leader Badr-al-Din Interviewed

92AE0288A Sofia ZEMYA in Bulgarian 26 Feb 92
pp 1, 4

[Interview with Salah Badr-al-Din, secretary-general of the Kurdish People's Union Party, by Georgi Miloshev; place and date not given: "The Resources of the Land Will Be Sufficient for All of Us"]

[Text] The Kurds have been fighting for their national independence for as long as we Bulgarians remained slaves to the Turks. They avoid describing their present situation as "slavery," but, in fact, it is, despite the various forms it has assumed in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

This was the main (and virtually only) topic of our discussion with Salah Badr-al-Din, secretary-general of the Kurdish People's Union Party, who was a guest of our country.

He was a mere child when he became a member of the liberation movement and the youngest member of the party he leads today. His entire youth was spent either in clandestinity or in jail (a total of 17 years behind bars). He has fought in Iraq as Barzani's supporter. He says that most Kurds currently live in the territory of the four states we named. Have they ever been independent? Independence occurred a long time ago and was of short duration.

Initially, in the late Middle Ages, the Kurds had a number of small states. Half of them fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and one could speak of any kind of national struggle (as was the case with Bulgaria) as actually starting in the 19th century. Their rights were suppressed in international conferences as well.

The 1923 Lozanne Treaty makes no mention of either Armenians or Kurds.

[Miloshev] What is the present objective of the Kurdish People's Union Party?

[Badr-al-Din] Under the conditions of the new international order that is being established, we hope that our problem, as well, will be resolved through dialogue and understanding. We are relying on the active role of the United Nations, but we are concerned about the position taken by the United States.

To this day, the leadership in Washington does not agree that the Kurdish problem is the problem of a legitimate nation. Why? Because it has vested interests in Turkey, Iran, Syria, and even Iraq. That is why, despite the fact that here and there throughout the world boundaries are being revised, the boundaries that were imposed by force in our area remain untouched.

[Miloshev] What is the attitude of the other interested states toward the Kurds?

[Badr-al-Din] It varies. It depends on the true nature of the government and the balance of power in their countries. It could be said that the worst suppression of the Kurds is in Iraq. However, the situation in Turkey is roughly the same.

[Miloshev] Has there been any change in Ankara's views concerning the Kurds?

[Badr-al-Din] There has been, over the past two to three years. For example, President Ozal has acknowledged the existence of 12 million of my compatriots on Turkish territory. The program of the current government hints that a suitable solution to the Kurdish problem should be found. However, to this day no real steps have been taken in this regard. The result is that, on the one hand, we have heaps of great promises, and, on the other, the military acts as it wishes, attacking Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq.

[Miloshev] What is Bulgaria's view?

[Badr-al-Din] I have repeatedly said that your people show a great deal of sympathy for the Kurds. It seems to me, however, that the Bulgarian public has a more progressive attitude toward us and our struggle than some political forces.

Mr. Badr-al-Din was looking at an open map of the land inhabited by Kurds and the neighboring countries. Bulgaria was on the northwestern edge of the map. Indeed, it was quite close. All that stood between was Turkey. It is perhaps precisely this neighborhood that explains the restraint (to put it most mildly) of our present official circles concerning the Kurdish problem.

Iranian, Muslim Brotherhood Network in Buenos Aires

TA1903163992 Tel Aviv HADASHOT in Hebrew
19 Mar 92 p 7

[Text] A small group of the Muslim Brotherhood, connected to and funded by the Iranian embassy in the Argentine capital, openly operates in Buenos Aires. Their spiritual leader is Mohsen Rabbani (38), a Shiite Iranian who arrived from Tehran at the end of 1983 to convert people to Islam in Argentina. Among the members of the group are about 10 Christians who converted to Islam. This group operates in the al-Tawhid Mosque in the Floresta neighborhood of Buenos Aires. The Islamic Jihad announcement, in which it claimed responsibility for the attack, praised Abu-Yasir—a converted Argentine, who committed suicide in the bombing of the Israeli Embassy building.

About a month ago, group members held a ceremony marking the anniversary of the Khomeyni revolution, at the San Martin theater in the capital, opposite the Argentine parliament. The HADASHOT correspondent in Argentina, who has a radio program in Buenos Aires, met activists at this affair—one of them told him that he was a Christian who converted to Islam, and that he was

one of the members of the group who has taken upon himself the goal of destroying the State of Israel. The convert explained that the Gulf War was not a real war and that, when the revolution begins, they will act to totally destroy the State of Israel.

Members of the group are not involved in the established Islamic community in Buenos Aires. About one year ago, they organized a protest march against Zionism through the streets of the city. The march, which ended at the Iranian Embassy, was held in accordance with the call of

the ayatollah in Iran and the participants carried placards and photographs of the al-Aqsa Mosque and a torn star of David. The cultural attache of the Iranian Embassy, who joined in the march, gave a speech and presented Khalid al-Islambuli—the soldier and member of the the Muslim Brotherhood who murdered President al-Sadat—as a symbol.

Mohsen Rabbani was asked, in a newspaper interview, if the members of the group define themselves as anti-Semites: "Not at all," he responded, "after all, we ourselves are of Semitic extraction. We are only opposed to Zionism."

Islamic Conference Aid to Somalia Discussed

92AE0293A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
26 Mar 92 p 4

[Interview with Ambassador Ibrahim Salih Bakr, ICO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, by Sayyid Ahmad Khalifah in Jiddah, date not given: "ICO Assistant Secretary General to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT: Somalia Needs To Be Rebuilt From Scratch; Siad Barre Still Hopes To Regain Power"]

[Text] Jiddah—Islamic action has come to have a new role and a new meaning, despite all that is attributed to it, both negatively and positively. If so, then more than one party has begun to play a role or seek a role to attribute to Islam, or it has begun to try to tie its activities or actions to Islam. But the Islamic Conference Organization [ICO], which was founded in the 1960s as a reflection of that period's necessities and requirements, continues to play a prominent role in this current phase of Islamic action, whose burdens have increased clearly now.

It is true that the ICO played a major Islamic role when it first launched its activities, and that this role was up to the level of the issues and concerns of that phase. Issues such as the superpowers conflict and the endeavors to spread control and influence and to impose ideologies hostile to Islam preoccupied an important part of the organization's broad actions and activities. But with all the developments the world is undergoing now, it seems that Islamic action, like the other general frameworks of any regional or international action, has come to have a new meaning, and even a new message. For example, communism has met its well-known end. When viewed objectively, it seems as if a void has developed in this area of Islamic action. Consequently, this void has saved Islamic action—whether within the ICO framework or within any other beneficial or worthwhile (organization)—a lot of time, effort, and resources. On this point, Ambassador Ibrahim Salih Bakr, the ICO assistant secretary general for political affairs, has said: "It is the complete opposite. The Islamic role has grown greater since the collapse of communism; the return of the Islamic giant of Central Asia to the vast expanse of direct and clear Islamic action; and the fall and disappearance of the communist obstacles within which this giant was confined throughout the years of communist domination, which lasted more than half a century. It is true that the Muslim citizen of Central Asia has returned to open Islamic action, armed with a strong and firm faith, despite the long and exhaustive endeavors to distort and disfigure this faith. This citizen wants now to make up for the long time in which he was deprived of open Islamic action. He wants to play a role, to contribute, and to have a presence. He wants to learn more and he wants to build his new Muslim society. Here, the ICO has a role to play in all these legitimate aspirations, and this is what we are trying to perform by accepting as ICO members the Central Asia states that have returned to the vast expanse of Islamic action."

This interview, which barely touched on Islamic action issues from several angles, was conducted with Ambassador Bakr upon his return from two missions in Somalia and Afghanistan. The time for the interview was short because it was conducted immediately upon the ambassador's return. But it seems that it was necessary for the ambassador to put his papers in order before he could give a detailed interview on complex issues, some of which have just started to seek solutions. However, Ambassador Bakr's effort to touch on a number of various Islamic issues was tantamount to a serious, not to mention daring, endeavor to discuss the issues and concerns of Islamic action under such complex conditions.

How Was Resolution Achieved?

[Khalifah] As ICO representative, you have taken part in the latest international efforts concerning Somalia, where a cease-fire resolution was achieved. Some people have considered this resolution a great accomplishment in that bloody and complex climate. How was this accomplishment made in Mogadishu?

[Bakr] The ICO exerted major efforts on the Somalia issue. The most significant of those efforts was our participation in the two Djibouti conferences, and then in the Mecca conference, during which the second Djibouti accord was signed. In wake of the developments which weakened these Djibouti accords, we, as an organization, contacted the United Nations so it would join hands with us. Consequently, the three parties—the UN, the ICO, and the OAU [Organization for African Unity]—met. This meeting was followed by a meeting among the warring Somali factions. Subsequently, other meetings were held on the spot in Mogadishu. All this culminated in a cease-fire, which is being continually followed by other steps.

[Khalifah] It was not expected that this international role would be accomplished in Somalia. Moreover, your visit under conditions of ceaseless, indiscriminate fighting was a dangerous adventure in itself. How did the international effort manage to accomplish what it has accomplished, and what is the Islamic role in this effort?

[Bakr] The truth is that this mission has been one of the most difficult diplomatic missions for me and for my colleagues, I believe. We would leave Nairobi for Mogadishu in the morning and return to it in the evening, after spending our entire day negotiating with this faction and then going to that faction to have a point clarified or to surmount an obstacle. It was difficult, even impossible, for us to spend our nights in Mogadishu for several reasons, the most important being the total lack of security and the fact that Mogadishu cannot accommodate guests, not even for one night, under these conditions, because it lacks everything connected with life. The most difficult phase of our efforts was the phase of discussion with General Farrah Aidid, who had a different idea of the international role. He rejected this role, especially where UN forces were concerned,

whereas Provisional President Ali Mahdi welcomes the international effort and sees the necessity of the presence of UN forces in Mogadishu. After great efforts, we reached a compromise with the two sides, namely to dispatch unarmed UN observers to tend and watch the cease-fire and to distribute food and humanitarian aid to people who live below the zero level in Mogadishu and in the war-torn towns and villages of Somalia.

Siad Barre Still Wishes for a Role!

[Khalifah] You then visited southern Somalia. Did you meet with ex-President Siad Barre or with his representatives, and has the international mission noted that the man has a role in the future?

[Bakr] After Mogadishu, we did actually visit Kismayu. In addition to familiarizing ourselves with the conditions there, our objective was to expand the circle of consultations in order to hold a comprehensive Somali conference. But we didn't meet with ex-President Siad Barre, even though it had been planned to meet with him. However, this meeting was omitted when some people viewed it as encouragement to Barre and to his stances. However, we met with elements that have tribal, political, and organizational relations with Barre. We noticed that the south is also experiencing tribal feuds and conflicts. This complicates holding the conference for which we are working. Six Somali organizations or fronts attended the Djibouti meetings and subsequent meetings. Now, there are dozens of organizations that have to take part in any future effort.

[Khalifah] Is consideration being given to holding the anticipated conference in Djibouti, also?

[Bakr] There are proposals on this issue. Some see that it should be close to Somalia—in Ethiopia, Kenya, or Eritrea. Some propose that the conference be held out of the region altogether. Consultations on this issue continue.

[Khalifah] Recently, there has been talk about military activity by ex-President Siad Barre. Has the international mission felt that he is engaged in such activity? Should there be such activity, would its objective be to regain power or to remain as a future figure in any settlement of the Somali issues?

[Bakr] There are tangible fears that the man aspires to return to Mogadishu to rule and to put an end to what he considers to be the state of vacuum and anarchy existing in the country since his departure. He is certainly wagering on the other forces' conflicts and waiting for them to exhaust each other before he advances and strikes everybody when they are weakened and exhausted by their conflicts.

Incidents Faced by Mission

[Khalifah] The international mission members were exposed to an incident which nearly turned into a catastrophe when an artillery shell exploded close to you. What is the story?

[Bakr] All life is in God's hand. He alone gave us new lives when we were surprised by a grenade exploding only 10 meters from where we were watching Provisional President Ali Mahdi sign the cease-fire agreement at his headquarters in Karan. We never did discover the source of the grenade or the goal of those who exploded it. To put it briefly, the entire trip was engulfed in perils, in a country where the law of the jungle rules and prevails. The situation is better now and we hope that it will continue to improve. This is what is important.

[Khalifah] Who rules Somalia now or, at least, what is the fate and position of the provisional government which emanated from the Djibouti conference?

[Bakr] To start with, there has to be a leader for the country and the state in this phase. Somalia's provisional government represents this leader and it would be beneficial if the others appreciate this fact, if only for the sake of continuation of the current international momentum in which the current provisional government has had a major role. The entire issue is temporary and is tied to stages. If these stages develop as they should, then the choice will belong to the Somali people, who will have to select their ruler.

[Khalifah] What does Somalia need now, and where can the domestic and international efforts to rebuild the country begin?

[Bakr] Frankly, Somalia needs to begin building from scratch. Its entire infrastructure as a state has collapsed as a result of the various phases of the national conflict.

[Khalifah] So if the cease-fire holds and if the Somali factions agree to balance the national dialogue to settle matters, what is the expected Islamic role in the reconstruction process?

[Bakr] The ICO seeks to carry on with its current role in Somalia until the conditions there stabilize, God willing. There are numerous ideas and plans. It is possible to mobilize all aspects of the Islamic efforts, to initiate assistance and aid from the capable Islamic governments and organizations, to provide aid through Islamic Development Bank projects, and to coordinate with other international and regional efforts. There is more than one way to aid Somalia and to contribute Islamic and international efforts to its reconstruction. Peace is the basis on which these efforts are founded.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Applications Call for Israeli Friendship Society

92AF0551D Doha AL-SHARQ in Arabic 4 Feb 92 p 9

[Text] Cairo—The Ministry of Social Affairs received two applications to establish an Egyptian-Israeli friendship society. The first application was submitted by a businessman called Khalid Hajjaj who, with a group of businessmen and merchants with business and trade relations with Israel, announced the establishment of an Egyptian-Israeli friendship society with the aim of setting up joint trade fairs and strengthening cooperation between Egypt and Israel.

What is ironic is that the second application was submitted by a number of people working in the office of Agriculture Minister Yusuf Wali, following their return from Tel Aviv recently on a visit aimed at strengthening cultural ties and the exchange of delegations. It should be recalled that Israeli agricultural experts frequently visit Egypt. A source at the Ministry of Social Affairs said that this was not the first application of its kind. An application was submitted last year by a group of prominent persons headed by a former Egyptian prime minister. The official said that both applications designate the headquarters of the society. The applications are accompanied by a program which provides that the society has no political objectives. The official said the ministry has to accept or reject the applications within 30 days. If no answer is given, this is regarded as an acceptance of the application and a permit to establish the society. The ministry has referred the applications to the ministries of interior and foreign affairs in order to look into them within 30 days.

Arab League Said To Propose Changes in Charter

92P40164A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 10 Mar 92 p 2

[Text] Cairo—AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT has learned that the proposed amendments to the Arab League Charter revolve around six main articles.

The amendments include forming a joint Arab defense council consisting of the Egyptian and Arab League members' defense ministers—similar to the European Parliament—in which all of the Arab nations would participate. The amendments aim at making the Arab summit conferences the supreme instrument of the Arab League, and stipulate holding them once or twice yearly.

They include amending Article 6 of the current charter to allow preparation of detailed measures in case of hostility or threat in accordance with the contents of Article 7 of the UN Charter on graduated sanctions. They include an amendment precluding resolutions being issued by the Arab League by a majority which is binding only on those who agree to them, and making these resolutions binding on the membership as a whole,

similar to the way that it is done in the overwhelming majority of international organizations.

Finally, they form an Arab court of justice as a permanent judicial instrument whose function is to adjudicate the legal quarrels which arise among Arab nations in final judgments which are binding and have legal force. This is a semi-collective Arab request and, at the same time, is a preventive measure to achieve control over Arab conflicts and prevent their growing into a threat to pan-Arab security.

In addition, the permanent delegates to the Arab League today discussed issues dealing with the Arab League Council's convening on 16 March. Arab League sources said that the most important issues which would be discussed by the ministerial council are the Palestinian issue, the peace process, and the Somali crisis.

Also, the delegates' committee on Arab-African relations chaired by Dr. Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid met yesterday to prepare a report on the next African summit in Dakar.

PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

Articles Discuss Economic Future of Territories

Academic Study on Development Potential

92AE0273A Jerusalem AL-FAJR in Arabic 19 Feb 92 p 7

[Economic Study by Dr. Samir Hazbun, dean of the College of Commerce and Economics, Bir Zayt University: "Introduction to Economic Growth in Occupied Territories, Policies, Challenges"]

[Text] The Israeli occupation has led to fundamental changes in the life of the Palestinian people. In spite of all the reverses, the Palestinian people have worked tirelessly toward establishing an independent Palestinian state. That has been expressed in various struggles and on many levels. With the beginning of the eighties, the Palestinian people plunged into an economic battle. In early 1981, a development conference was held by al-Samud [steadfastness] (an initiative by the Arab Intellectual Seminar—Jerusalem), which discussed the painful economic reality and drew up general guidelines for economic growth that could contribute to the creation of an economic base for the Palestinian state. Several conferences, forums, and Palestinian and non-Palestinian development attempts followed that. The joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee adopted growth ideas and pursued a fiscal policy toward this goal. This was followed by non-Palestinian attempts, such as the Draper project to improve the standard of living, the Jordanian five-year plan in 1986, the European Common Market [ECM] project, etc. Despite unannounced goals, all these plans formed an introduction to development that contributed to the enrichment of the Palestinian situation, arming it with development ideas

and guidelines. During the years of the intifadah, especially last year, discussion of the subject of growth increased. For this purpose, several lending institutions and development centers were formed. A number of local, foreign, and financial institutions have taken the initiative to conduct a development campaign, which has made the ordinary Palestinian citizen believe that we are rocketing toward building an advanced economy, along with giving hope to others that these steps will lead to improving their economic situation. As a result, requests for loans and financing have poured into the institutions concerned with this business, and the market for economic feasibility studies has flourished remarkably. That was accompanied by the authorities granting permission for the establishment of scores of new factories and workshops, and easing some of the restrictions on investment.

In the face of this situation, we must stop and ask about the strategy for this development. What are its mechanisms and the directions of its real goals?

Because of the nature of the case, I will deal with this problem from a theoretical, scientific, and academic perspective. It is important to define the concept of development, which is often still vague; and then to define the strategies and the implementing mechanisms to handle it, in light of Palestinian development reality.

At the outset, I would like to emphasize that, since economists have not agreed on a definition for the science of economics, it is not strange that they have failed to reach a unified definition for one of its branches, which we call developmental economics. If we examine the literature of economic development during past decades, we will note how most of them have confused the concepts of developmental economics with economic growth, economic development, and comprehensive development.

For the purpose of overcoming ambiguities and avoiding the prevailing confusion about these concepts, I am setting forth definitions as agreed upon in the field of economics:

I. Economic Growth: This means a real increase in national product and in the individual's share of it over a specific period of time. There are three kinds of economic growth: spontaneous growth, transitory growth, and planned growth.

II. Economic Development: This is the process through which a backward country is changed into an economically-advanced country. (This is where the confusion comes in, especially at times when uninterrupted or continual growth is considered development.)

III. Comprehensive Development: This is aimed at the comprehensive revival of the society as a whole, including the development of man's material and intellectual capabilities. In this regard, we should note precisely that capitalist countries have made developmental

progress in the field of individual freedoms, while socialist countries have achieved equality in the distribution of income.

Therefore, after setting definitions, we can raise the following important question: Why do we talk about development? It is well-known that there are reasons and needs that the development battle imposes upon us. These reasons may be categorized into two classes: comprehensive theories and economic theories.

Comprehensive theories move us toward development of the following elements: climate, inadequate resources, absence of systems, performance incentives, social change, colonization, subservience, and backwardness. Accordingly, any nation that suffers from the previously mentioned phenomena is in need of development based on comprehensive theories.

If the reasons involve the second category (economic theories), this means that the causes lie in one or all of the following, such as a low wage policy, effects of international trade, barriers and obstacles, etc.

I believe that these two categories help to define the framework of theories that could be followed for the development process, so that the concept becomes integrated. If it were partial, it would form an introduction or background for everyone discussing development, while on the other hand, we would have determined the basis for a start toward true, serious development.

After this long review of the definitions and reasons, an important and—for us—decisive question arises: What are the possibilities of development under the occupation, especially in light of the characteristics that have been mentioned?

I believe that there is a consensus among all Palestinian circles and various groups that development is possible.

In the face of this consensus, another important and—for us as specialists—decisive question arises: How to achieve this, especially in light of the lack of a clear strategy and a clearly defined development philosophy?

Economic Development Strategies in General

I believe that it is definitely necessary to clarify the strategic bases of development, so that we can be easily guided toward an answer to these questions. Consequently, when that occurs, we will have defined the development policies that must be followed. Economists know that economic development strategies can be summarized as follows:

1. Heavy Industrial Strategy: This form is considered one of the development methods that can be used. It was the model for Soviet development, which was based on the principle of beginning with the development of huge, heavy industries. This strategy was reflected on the Arab scene by Soviet assistance to Egypt in building the High Dam, the Hulwan steel complex, etc. It is known that there is an investment trend in the occupied territories

toward large projects, such as the cement factory or building a harbor for the Gaza Strip, which can be categorized within this strategy.

2. Industrialization Strategy: In fact, this strategy is being applied in the occupied territories through a general trend toward establishing the largest possible number of factories, without any regard for any existing or previous strategy designed for this purpose. However, it does represent a general trend.

3. Strategy of Substitution for Imports: The intifadah years have formed a real introduction to the boycott of Israeli and foreign goods which created the strategy of substituting for imports through reliance on national industry and encouraging local alternatives. These circumstances led to imposing a general trend that falls within the framework of a development strategy. This trend still prevails and is becoming stronger.

4. Strategy of Agricultural and Rural Development: As a result of the importance of the agricultural sector in the occupied territories, and because of its role in the formation of national income, efforts to develop this sector have been multiplied in recent years. Mighty efforts have been made and financial resources allocated to developing the agricultural sector. This same concern has been reflected through establishing institutions for agricultural assistance and agricultural advisory cooperatives. This has led to improved and diversified production in general, although it cannot satisfy all the requirements of the occupied areas.

What applies to the three aforementioned strategies also applies to agricultural strategy, because all these strategies have their directions in the occupied territories.

5. Strategy of Fulfilling Basic Needs: This strategy is aimed at satisfying citizens' requirements and improving the infrastructure, in terms of housing, electricity, water, etc. One also notes tendencies toward a strategy such as this in the occupied territories, despite the limited success achieved in this category.

Therefore, we find that there are tendencies toward all five abovementioned strategies in the occupied territories, but that does not mean that we are traveling down the correct path. One may assume that these actual directions in development strategies can be changed into a development policy that falls under a comprehensive economic development strategy.

This constitutes the fundamental challenge for development trends and policies prevailing in the occupied territories, regardless of where their paths lead. So that the basic goal may be reached, I think that this challenge requires the following action:

1. Comprehensive Survey: I believe that conducting a comprehensive socio-economic survey of all sectors in the occupied territories, along with their various resources and activities, would form a solid foundation

for a clear development strategy and would be the first step toward true development.

2. Coordination: Overcoming the lack of a coordination process between the various lending and development institutions in the occupied territories on the one hand, and the production and non-production sectors on the other, would constitute a sound, correct introduction to a successful development process. In addition, coordination would contribute to overcoming many problems of incompatibility and redundancy, and would open horizons for achieving tangible and positive accomplishments.

3. Defining Development Priorities: Continuing the discussion about development in the absence of its basic elements, particularly determining its priorities, we find that true development for the occupied territories cannot be guaranteed unless priorities are set on the basis of the importance of each sector, existing conditions, timely needs, and negative and positive repercussions. When all this is linked with the results of the comprehensive economic survey, then priorities can be determined, such as indicating an urgent need for agricultural sector financing, followed by the trades and services and, subsequently, industry, commerce, etc.

A clear schedule of development priorities makes it possible to link the general strategy and timely needs of society. In addition, it is possible to achieve tangible accomplishments within a short period of time.

4. Determining Sources of Financing: It is well-known that most money-lending and development institutions in the occupied territories rely on outside financial sources. This sometimes raises questions about the true goals of development, as some allege.

Therefore, we call for the determination of fixed financial sources with true development goals serving the Palestinian people's interests and true comprehensive economic development, because continuing the process of reliance on unknown, foreign financial sources could result in doubts about the correctness of these development directions and could lead to continuing economic subservience and increased foreign control over independent Palestinian economic decision. Consequently, this could involve us, in one form or another, in the divisiveness of international action and subservience—to a great degree—on Metropole in one form or another. This, in turn, could result in unhealthy political consequences.

5. Capital Accumulation: After this long period of time, we must work toward creating projects that will help in the re-accumulation of capital, since that will contribute to creating self-financing for the development process which, in turn, will build a foundation for self-financing for growth and subsequent development, without considerable reliance on foreign financing.

In order to achieve what was set forth above, there must be a mechanism to implement the desired goal, in the

absence of a central authority that can impose obligations on everyone through the required legislation. The only option left to us is the mechanism of a moral-political obligation on all development and lending institutions, production projects, and all groups in the community, particularly since experience with the moral-political obligation during the intifadah years has proved that it exists on all levels, from boycotting Israeli goods to opening shops at strictly determined times, and to the days of general strikes and other socio-economic and political manifestations. All this can form a possible introduction for a mechanism of implementation in the present stages.

The sum of these strategies and policies, and the challenges stemming from the reality and its various problems, constitute the first step toward a true development policy or strategy. That is self-reliance. It can be the point of departure toward the best development strategy, which can help to overcome the problems of unemployment, build a firm economic and industrial foundation, and improve conditions for individuals in society as a whole and on various social, political, and economic levels.

The principle of self-reliance is a basic pillar of the comprehensive development strategy and of determining our requirement priorities.

Export Potential to Arab States

92AE0273B Jerusalem AL-FAJR in Arabic 19 Feb 92
p 7

[Article: "Possibility of Opening Arab Markets to Palestinian Exports Depends on Recent Arab Economic Council Resolution"]

[Text] The Arab League Economic and Social Council, at the close of business in its 50th session, pledged to support the economy of the occupied territories and recommended encouraging and developing Palestinian exports, especially to the Arab nations.

The council, which met in Cairo on the ministerial level and which is responsible for managing economic affairs for the league, was tasked with drawing up a list of export possibilities for Palestinian producers and conveying that information to the Arab nations. The council also called on the Arab Investment Insurance Agency to offer every guaranteed facility to encourage the marketing of Palestinian products in the Arab nations. Ilyas Frayj, the mayor of Bethlehem and a member of the Palestinian negotiating delegation to the peace talks, stated that "as important as the issuing of this resolution is, its implementation will be even more important, so that it does not remain merely ink on paper." Data indicates that the value of exported agricultural and industrial goods during 1988 to Jordan and from there to the other Arab nations—especially the Gulf states—totaled \$100 million. Dr. Samir Hazbun, dean of the College of Economics in Bir Zayt University, stated: "The value of

these exports has dropped considerably in recent years. This resolution could increase and encourage exports to the Arab nations."

Palestinian circles in the occupied territories say that the Arab League Economic and Social Council issued a similar resolution during its 41st session held in Amman, but that obstacles are still being put in the path of exporting Palestinian products to Arab markets. Palestinians say that it was unreasonable that the European Common Market [ECM] countries expressed their considerable and sincere interest in receiving agricultural products from the occupied territories while, at the same time, certain Arab nations are trying to ignore this entire matter. It is unreasonable to continue to put obstacles before exporting products from the occupied territories to Arab markets on erroneous pretexts. These obstacles will leave the Palestinian Arab people standing their ground, exposed to occupation pressures aimed at forcing them to leave their land under utmost material pressure. It is unreasonable, therefore, that we help the occupation achieve its goals. It has become a national demand on all Arab nations, and certainly before the European countries, to open their markets to Palestinian products.

Palestinian economists propose drawing up an integrated plan to subsidize agricultural and industrial products in the occupied territories, so that the Israeli Government will be denied the opportunity to move people off their land and the possibility of replacing them with immigrants from all over the world.

Ilyas Frayj concluded his talk by saying: "The sincerity of this resolution depends on its implementation. We hope that implementation will be soon." He gave an example of that. "We used to export building stones to Kuwait and the other Gulf states. Are Kuwait and the other Gulf states ready to buy this material?" Frayj implored the Arab nations, particularly the Gulf states, to open their markets to products from the occupied territories.

PLO Economist on Independent Economy

92AE0273C Jerusalem AL-FAJR in Arabic 19 Feb 92
p 7

[Article: "Economies of Peace in the Middle East"]

[Text] If a Palestinian state is established in the occupied territories, would this state have the basic economic components? What is the nature of the economic relationships that would exist after the advent of peace in the Middle East? These questions arise at the end of the third round of direct talks between representatives of the Arab nations and Israel, and the conclusion of multilateral negotiations held in Moscow at the end of January 1992.

Abu-al-'Ala', chief of the PLO's Economic Office, answers many of these questions: "The economic and social program for the establishment of the independent

Palestinian state, and the study of the economic components of this state, have been concluded. This program was designed to meet the requirements of future stages, which are the stage of struggle and negotiations, the transitional stage, and the stage of complete national independence. All of these stages are intertwined and closely connected. Their requirements will need to be intertwined and closely connected, as well as their accomplishments."

Abu al-'Ala' added: "In the stage of national struggle and negotiations, the program will continue to implement economic and social projects and reinforce international relations, in order to increase production assistance for our nation, open international markets for Palestinian products, strengthen and develop the existing national institutions, and create other strategic institutions, such as banks, specialized training centers, and agricultural and industrial marketing centers at home and abroad. In this context, the International Palestinian Development Bank has gone through important implementation stages."

Regarding preparations for the transitional stage, and the ensuing total national utilization, Abu al-'Ala' said: "A comprehensive study has been prepared concerning the economic and social components of the Palestinian people, within the framework of their independent state. Moreover, high-level experts have been tasked with preparing a comprehensive, sector-by sector program, including a five-year plan encompassing the establishment of the state, with its administrative, organizational, and political structures. It also includes preparing and training the cadres required to operate these structures, including ministries; bureaus; councils; municipalities; and financial, social, and technological institutions. The program also includes a plan to correct the distortion created by the occupation, and to develop and utilize all the resources of the existing economic and social sectors, as well as arrangements to absorb the labor force and the returnees, and to improve conditions in refugee camps and in damaged areas and groups. There are also arrangements to establish sound economic relations with the world's nations. In addition, there is a plan for the state's general budget, with its own and foreign revenues and a list of various expenditures. All of that is within an organized, democratic, advanced infrastructure, including freedom of opinion and participation, and equal opportunities for all groups and areas without discrimination. It will also include a major, fundamental role for the private sector and individual initiative in economic and social activities."

Abu al-'Ala' pointed out that more than 90 experts and specialists from the occupied territories and abroad had helped in preparing this comprehensive program. The present state of Palestinian economic and social conditions was precisely diagnosed, as well as the occupation's damage, distortion, and defects to Palestinian infrastructure, national institutions, and natural resources. There is also the damage done subsequently to its economic and institutional sectors by the ramifications from the

Palestinian intifadah and its ensuing economic, social, and institutional measures because of self-reliance and breaking the connection with the Israeli economy. The material production base has to be rebuilt in an atmosphere of solidarity and unrivaled mutual agreement. On the other hand, there are the creative initiatives that the Palestinian private sector at home and abroad has achieved in business sectors of its various branches—including the Palestinian Samid Institute—in terms of experience, expertise, and unique accomplishments in economic, social, cooperative, political, diplomatic, and automation activities. All this guarantees total preparation for the Palestinian people's accepting their national power competently and efficiently, building institutions and structures capable of carrying the burdens of that stage, repairing distortions and defects created by the occupation, and creating distinguished economic and social growth.

Regarding the nature of the economic system that the independent Palestinian state will follow, Jawid al-Ghusayn, president of the Palestinian National Fund, said: "The independent Palestinian state will follow a system of free economy, in which institutions will have the fundamental role. It will allow investment of Palestinian capital and the establishment of projects inside Palestine." He pointed out that many Palestinians who have succeeded in establishing successful institutions and firms in Latin America, North America, the Arab Gulf states, and Europe have expressed their desire and intent to establish major projects on Palestinian soil that would contribute to laying the economic foundation of the Palestinian state.

The question most often asked of the economic scholar today is: Is a small economy capable of being independent?

Many economists believe that any economy can be established, regardless of size, because it would supply people with income, and because the appropriations of government bureaus would have to be commensurate with the size of this economy. If it wishes to continue to survive, the small economy must be a part of the world economy. A state can be established on any small piece of land, even a small city, but the question that arises today is: Can the state manage an independent economic policy? We see the world headed toward economic unity, as is the case with ECM countries. Economists point out that before talking about political unity, there must be talk about economic unity. If there is economic unity, political unity will follow.

Palestinian economists believe that, in light of the new world order, we Arabs need to try to form our own economic bloc so that we will have a place in the world of the future, whose features have begun to appear. It definitely will be a world of mutual dependence, and it is within our power to be effective and influential in this world, if we work seriously and diligently to build a strong, major economic bloc that could stand on an equal footing with other blocs in the world. We must

forge an economy that is appropriate for peace time, after the beginning of the end of this period of repeated wars with Israel. Jawid Ghusayn stated: "The doors to investment in Palestine will be open to Arab capital, so that it may share in the comprehensive economic development in the Palestinian state. Palestinian economic activity will be generally within the framework of Arab economic activity." Palestinians believe that Europe will contribute to the region's economic revitalization. There would be nothing to prevent European capital from coming to this region, the economic base for an independent Middle East.

ALGERIA

Moroccan Coverage of Current Events Criticized

92AF0614A Algiers EL WATAN in French
16 Mar 92 p 1

[Editorial by Tayeb Belghiche]

[Text] An incredible media campaign against Algeria has been launched in Morocco for the past month and no end is in sight. It targets our country's policies as well as prominent Algerian figures not held in the highest esteem at the Royal Palace in Rabat.

The latest victim of the campaign is none other than Abdelhamid Mehri, secretary general of the FLN [National Liberation Front]. In obscene language, he is accused of sending a message of congratulations to the leaders of the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro] Front on the occasion of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR). The campaign is increasingly taking the form of an operation aimed at bringing pressure to bear on Algeria at a time when the latter is concerned with internal problems. This intellectual and psychological terrorism is not gratuitous. We know the Moroccan press obeys orders and writes nothing without a green light from the Palace and Minister of Interior and Information Driss Basri, who keeps the press under his thumb.

Following statements by Algerian officials deemed ambiguous on the issue of the Western Sahara, Rabat is undoubtedly trying to drive the point home. It intends to have connections in high places in Algeria in order to use them to pressure the country to change its course. It is true that certain anonymous writings do lend credit to this hypothesis, as does the somewhat curious behavior of a number of public figures seeking to distort the truth. Nevertheless, writing in the daily ES SALEM, Mohamed Boudiaf clarified his position, emphasizing that his personal feelings are irrelevant and that only the country's position will guide his action on this sensitive subject.

However, the indecent conduct of the Moroccans has no bounds. It even resembles a form of blackmail, based on the belief that the time is right to attribute the most far-fetched positions to Algerians.

Such conduct on the part of individuals, if they truly exist, cannot be that of an Algeria which has its credibility, honor, and prestige to protect.

The Maghreb will be built by clarity and honesty, not fear, chauvinistic nationalism, Israeli-type claims, and dreams of another era.

Cooperation With Italy on Production of 'Green Fuel'

LD0804125692 Algiers APS in English 1008 GMT
7 Apr 92

[Text] Rome, April 7—"Snam Progetti" Italian company from "Eni" public [word indistinct] carbon group is scheduled to provide its technological assistance for the construction in Arzew (West of Algeria) of a complex for an annual 600 thousand ton production of "GEBE" (Green Fuel) announced a communique released in Rome. The communique pointed out this complex will use butane gas as a raw material. The Italian company was approved by Algerian and French companies respectively "Sonatrach" and "Total" and "Ecofuel" firm from "Eni" group. This approval was carried out after an assessment of the most advanced technologies. Moreover, the feasibility study is currently carried out and the final decision will be taken for the construction of the above mentioned complex as soon as the economic report is finished.

Boukrouh on RPA, Current Political Situation

92AF0578B Algiers L'HEBDO LIBERE in French
4-10 Mar 92 pp 16-17

[Interview with Nouredine Boukrouh, president of the Algerian Renewal Party (PRA), by Rachid Kaci; place and date not given: "Ghozali Dreams of an Apolitical Patriotic Rally (RPA)"; first paragraph is L'HEBDO LIBERE introduction]

[Text] Ghozali is dreaming of an Apolitical Patriotic Rally (RPA): "Whereas the country was hoping for a real turning point..., what it is getting is a thumbing of the nose—a scornful snicker." That remark by the president of the PRA [Algerian Renewal Party] expresses better than anything else his party's reaction to the recent changes within the government. Boudiaf, Machiavelli, Ghozali, Chadli, and others will be the focus of speeches by Boukrouh. Speaking to L'HEBDO LIBERE with the passion and lack of restraint for which he is known, he here delivers his opinions on the situation being experienced by Algeria.

[Kaci] Now that the makeup of the new government is known, the PRA is keeping a considerable distance between itself and Ghozali's action. This is all the more surprising in that you based your campaign on the idea of security. The HCE [High State Committee] is centering its first actions on that very terrain. What is the reason for your opposition?

[Boukrouh] The previous government was intended to be apolitical and to have a limited life, and the current government is not very different as far as its human makeup is concerned, but it is arrogantly establishing itself as antipolitical and as having in indefinite life. The government that Ghazali pulled out of his hat surprised everyone without pleasing anyone. Ghazali will not get far with a team like that. Whereas the country was hoping for a real turning point and for changes that would justify the interruption of the election process, what it is getting is a thumbing of the nose—a scornful snicker.

How can you expect us not to stay as far away as possible from a structure that is flawed at the start by being illicit and, what is more, by the fact that it was hastily thrown up on an empty lot? Where there should have been solid ground and a durable edifice, what they put up was a rickety shack threatening to collapse, a prefabricated structure: a house of cards with no reality or future.

Did they ask our opinion and thus have grounds for expecting our acquiescence today? No. For that matter, Ghazali is no longer concealing his desire to see all political life disappear. He recently denied the existence of democratic parties in Algeria. He sees no reason for the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] to exist, and he has loads of accumulated bitterness toward the FLN [National Liberation Front]. He is drawing closer to the ideal, which is to have no Parliament, no opposition, no motion of censure, and no voting—nothing except just him, him alone. Even the "tripartite" group with which he negotiated "his" policy is pulling away from him. He is alone on the field, and he can play Lego with the country's destiny. He needs only mirrors, reflectors, and rearview mirrors. And as for the rest of it, silence in the ranks! Our attitude has nothing to do with questions of security. The PRA is in favor of a strong, competent, and just state. For us, that is a permanent objective, but a strong state does not mean just the ability to restore order when it has been disturbed; basically, it is the ability to find a solution for every threatened break in socioeconomic equilibrium, every factor contributing to the destabilization of national consensus, and every abnormal situation bringing with it the threat of turmoil and uprisings. And we note that no major steps have yet been taken to deal with the causes of the events of October 1988, June 1991, and January 1992. Those in power barely consented to Chadli's departure.

[Kaci] What means do you foresee for carrying out the action plan introduced by Ghazali and his government?

[Boukrouh] It would be a tragic error to reduce the country's problems to the single dimension of an economic and financial crisis. Algeria is in the process of falling to pieces before our eyes. The events of 26 December showed that there were two Algerias, not to say several, in the same country. Each camp feels that the other is not welcome. In 30 years of independence, we have not yet managed to solve the problem of legitimate and legal access to power or, that of the conditions for

exercising it. After two and a half years of experimenting with an allegedly democratic system of operation, we have just seen the resolution of that issue postponed. But the political problem determines and sets the conditions for achieving an economic solution. The chief means I foresee for carrying out Ghazali's program is the proclamation of a state of emergency. That man was born under the sign of a state of siege, it is his fate, and he will probably prevail. In the absence of any parliamentary opposition, he can make any decisions he wants for implementing his plan. This is an absolutely favorable set of circumstances for an effective and rigorous policy, provided that one has the guts it takes and the courage to resist easy solutions. I recognize that being in power at present is no picnic. That was why Ghazali was able, by curbing his resentment and controlling his spite, to keep from gratuitously generating unanimous opposition to himself. If he thinks that the Apolitical Patriotic Rally (PRA) that he is dreaming of will give him a majority in the country, he is greatly mistaken. At the slightest blunder, he will find himself alone like Robinson Crusoe without Friday.

Teachers Humiliated

[Kaci] Don't you think that education—the school system—has not received as much attention as expected?

[Boukrouh] Why put too large a burden on the current government? The question of education is closely linked to the choice of society, a choice which Algeria has not yet made. It is the Gordian knot of all of our nation's problems. What ideas should be professed, what kind of life should be taught, what social and moral values should be handed on, and what languages should be chosen? Added to those basic considerations are the economic and material aspects and the matter of status: teachers have been sacrificed, thrown into poverty, and humiliated in comparison with the other professions.

Pupils and students crowd into classrooms and lecture halls, after which 80 percent of them wind up on the street, unemployed, and facing brick walls. That is a problem that the main political groups ought to have been working on together for the past two years in order to come up with an acceptable consensus and an indispensable long-term plan. But the successive governments of the past few years have not wanted to tackle Algeria's basic problems, which are: the demographic disaster, the scale of values, the language question, the social ladder, employment, and so on. A year and a half ago, the PRA submitted to the government a dossier on education and another on health. Abdelaziz Ben M'Hidi, a member of the PRA National Bureau, had spent a lot of time working on those dossiers. It was a complete waste of time. The government did not even acknowledge receiving them.

[Kaci] There is also the matter of the privatization of the public sector and the remake of the famous PAP [expansion not given], which intends to make a special effort for Ramadan this time.

[Boukrouh] Yes, it is disgraceful to hear high-level officials talking about filling the traditional markets during the holy month. There are things that are done without talking about them—which are automatic. But this reflects the way in which the leaders view their people: as eaters, stomachs, and recalcitrant participants in the fast. It is disgraceful! There would not be sufficient time in this interview to show you how wrong the government is in its evaluation of the Algerian economic tragedy. It makes us sick when we hear it said that money will come—that foreigners trust us.

The other day on television, did you see our minister of foreign affairs being received by a scowling emir in Kuwait, where he had gone to beg for aid and subsidies? Our problems are here, but we go looking for solutions elsewhere—in other people's savings and their propensity for charity. And the same men talk to you about "nif," "khchem," and "sovereignty." It is our mental concept of economics, which has been basically wrong for the past 30 years and perhaps always. Total bankruptcy is there for everyone to see, but everyone lies to everyone else, and no one has the honesty and courage to say that everything has to be done over. Along with Cuba, we are one of the last countries rejecting truth and economic reality. We prefer to go into debt and leave future generations with a bill that will be impossible to pay—we prefer to mortgage the country. Mentally, ideologically, and psychologically, we are hopelessly interventionist, socialist, and communist. The lobbies that have been set up to sponge off the public sector—that is, to enjoy the right to bankrupt enterprises belonging to everyone and no one without rendering any accounting at all or losing a single dinar from their own pockets—are sending out a message intended to serve only their personal interests. As far as they are concerned, the community is only an abstraction, an argument, and a myth. It is necessary to give that anthill a kick and leave only the parts that finance themselves and create wealth and jobs. But I realize that in Algeria, you can blaspheme, apostasize, and deny God, but you cannot say what must be said to the several hundred parasites living off deficits, overdrafts, and indebtedness like vampires living off the blood of others.

[Kaci] The state is going to take over the property, both personal and real, of the political parties. Moreover, you will no longer be able to rely on dues collected from your members. How will the PRA, which many people consider an "elite party," get along?

[Boukrouh] We don't know exactly what the authorities are planning, but logically, it is the FLN that is most affected by the question. For our part, we are waiting for the ad hoc committee to finalize, on behalf of the state, its transfer of the few premises assigned to us by the state.

Our headquarters, which have caused so much gossip, consist of two six-room apartments, with another floor being occupied as a private residence by a citizen whom we found on the premises. Those headquarters were

assigned to us by a decision of the prime minister and at his initiative. They had been previously occupied—for six years—by the Ministry of Information, not the Ministry of Education. Our papers are in order, and if necessary, we will take the matter to court. As far as finances are concerned, we have managed our funds seriously and thriftily, and we can hold on with no problems. Everything about us is completely in order. Now there are the myths going around about us and our "wealth." The PRA has never been financed by anyone, and it does not depend on anyone. Our branches in the governorates cover their own local expenses and do not send anything to headquarters. As you say, we are an elite party, but only in the moral, ethical, and intellectual sense, not in the economic or social sense. We would like for all our people to become elite: a nation having a sense of merit, of what is noble, and of lofty values.

[Kaci] Don't you expect to use the system of lobbies or sponsors?

[Boukrouh] No, we will not do anything of the sort, and anyway, I don't understand what you mean by that. We will continue to live as we have for the past two and a half years. Besides, the PRA does not have many expenses. It pays three salaries and a few other expenses. Our major expenses have been in connection with the congress, the fixing up of premises, publishing and communications costs, get-togethers and meetings, and election campaigns. Personally, I don't receive a penny, I use my own vehicle, and I don't cost the PRA anything. Our needs are very modest, and our accounts are ready for inspection or examination by any appropriate authority at any time.

[Kaci] "There is reason to fear that those in prison today are the mujahedin and historical leaders of tomorrow." You made that statement. Are you playing footsy with the FIS or are you nostalgic for the front pages of L'ECHO D'ALGER?

[Boukrouh] You are well aware that mass arrests for engaging in political and militant activity have an effect other than that of neutralizing a situation or an established fact and make only the Communists happy. For those arrested, prison becomes "the seminary of the just." The policy of mass arrests is not effective, it solves nothing, and it can only delay the solution of today's problems until tomorrow. That being said, the restoration of order and security sometimes involves systematized and generalized measures. I made the statement you refer to in a specific context and not, as you say, for the purpose of playing footsy with the FIS. I don't need to behave that way, because if that were my intention, I would have said so clearly. Our position with respect to the FIS is well known, of long standing, regular, and constant. What we say about it in private is no different than what we say about it in public. Our positions with regard to it do not change depending upon its strength or weakness, upon its incarceration or release, or upon its continued existence or dissolution.

If Stalin and Beria Returned, It Would Be My Turn To Wind Up Making Bricks

[Kaci] If, as you foresee, the single party returns, will you take up writing, set up a brickworks, or go back to reading Machiavelli?

[Boukrouh] The ingredients for a return to the single party are already in the air. It would be a terrible step backward. But Algerians will not go along with it. Those who have still not understood anything or who believe they can base their power on bayonets for a long period are not the only ones who think it is possible to make Algeria another Albania or to sponsor a single party. Anyway, Boudiaf, Ghozali, and those in charge of carrying out this plan should not be using television and the state-owned media, much less the public's money, to advertise that future party. In my opinion, they should have financed an appeal to the nation out of their own pocket, in their own name, and on the basis of a program which they themselves wrote rather than giving the job to high-ranking officials paid by the state. Those simple details reveal the Stalinist, backward looking, and anachronistic mentality of some individuals.

Ordinarily, Beghoui should have reacted, and the courts should have started frowning on that flagrant misuse of public property.

If, God forbid, we went back to the days of Stalin and Beria, it would be my turn to take my chances in the concrete block or tile business while hoping to wind up with a brickyard. So I will wait patiently for some HCE to be formed and then go home. Since you like Machiavelli, here is something he said that ought to be pondered by our fundamentalist patriots: "The desires of free peoples are rarely harmful to freedom, because they arise either from oppression or from the fear of it." He also said, in his famous *De Principatibus*, written for the makers of single parties: "And anyone who becomes the lord of a city accustomed to living free and does not destroy it, let him expect to be destroyed by it, because in its rebellions, it always has a refuge in the name of its freedom and its former customs, which no passing of time or benefaction will ever cause to be forgotten."

[Kaci] You talk very freely about Boudiaf. Do you know him?

[Boukrouh] No, no more than anyone else does, except that I have had the pleasure of seeing him up close. At his age, and considering what he has endured throughout his life, I assume that he will not take offense at my tone. There is no lack of respect in my attitude toward him, and I will even confess to you that I like him. The only thing is that it is necessary to tolerate a certain sense of humor in political life during this gray and pessimistic time. It is also a good idea to be done with stereotyped language, brownnosing, and hypocrisy. To get back to our president, I have no doubts about his honesty, his good will, and his intelligence. But he may be poorly informed, in which case he is being taken advantage of. We want him to keep his feet on the ground, and we

don't want him to give up on 1992 or to lose sight of reality. There is nothing better than a certain critical style for keeping someone wide awake. That is why freedom of expression in a country is sometimes more important and precious than anything else. I may have been fierce with Chadli, Hamrouche, Ghozali, or others, but never out of personal hatred, cruelty, or contempt. It's just because it was needed.

In the current situation, we are playing the role of volunteer consultants in relation to the government. It is not our goal to destroy the government, cut it off from the population, or make life miserable for it, but to prevent it from living on yesterday's errors in judgment—from continuing with the men, ideas, and methods which have gotten the country into this fix. Because from the very start, having been conceived as a ruse by the government itself, democracy failed. It is therefore the government's ruses that must be brought to an end, not political life itself. So Boudiaf must not be led into error.

Executive Decree To Dissolve Local Councils

LD1404093692 *Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic*
2200 GMT 12 Apr 92

[Text] Informed sources in Algeria said that an executive decree relating to the dissolution of the incompetent provincial and municipal councils will be signed before next Wednesday. The same sources made it clear that this measure will affect 485 municipalities, among them 450 belonging to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), 22 belonging to the National Liberation Front, and seven run by independent electees. It should be noted that the FIS runs 853 municipalities out of a total 1,541, and 32 provincial popular councils out of a total 48. In the capital province, 33 municipalities are considered incompetent and will soon be replaced by executive managers.

Intended Purpose of Mosques Said Abused

92AF0578A *Algiers EL MOUDJAHID in French*
6-7 Mar 92 p 11

[Editorial by M.A.: "Purpose and Use"]

[Text] It is not too soon today to note the extent of the deviations occurring within the mosques. We are a long way from those "oratories that God allowed to be put up, in which his name is invoked and in which he is glorified from dawn to dusk" (Koran). The mosque's mission and calling have been constantly perverted in recent years. Diverted from its intended use as a place for prayer and the invocation of Almighty God, the blessed "House of God" has unfortunately been devoted to the business of indoctrinating young people. The pulpit, that rostrum formerly sculpted with art and finesse, has become a pile of grayish wood resembling the kind of talk one hears from the new messiahs. For its part, the "mihrab" [niche in the mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca] has been suppressed by those cranks, who take their dogma

from various schisms condemned by the Koran and the Sunnah [tradition]. The minaret has unfortunately taken on the stench of genuine assault rockets being fired against the tranquillity and peace of mind of the citizens. The call to prayer is the echo of a call to war or jihad (?).

That being said, the atmosphere in our mosques in recent years provided a forewarning of what goes on there today: the big priority on Friday is dreaded as a repetitive syndrome by citizens who see it as the starting point for violence, intolerance, and anarchy. The sermon that is delivered there is not without guilt in connection with the acts of vandalism, which make us miss the founders and benefactors of those mosques. The latter were prompted only by the desire to build up a store of good works for the day of resurrection. They were simply obeying the tradition that says that "there is in paradise a dwelling place that will be obtained by the one who builds a mosque." Their noble intentions made it possible to build over 8,000 new mosques. The only thing to be regretted, however, is the wrong use that is being made of the mosques, which remain, as founded, a witness to the true religious fervor of those who built it.

Merchants Report Increased Violence for Ramadan

92AF0614B Algiers EL WATAN in French
17 Mar 92 p 5

[Editorial by Tahar Hani: "Merchants: Favorite Target"]

[Text] There has been a renewed outbreak of attacks during this month of Ramadan. Indeed, they have reportedly taken on a broader scope in several of the capital's commercial districts and highways such as Bab-Djedid and the Casbah, where many merchants have complained of acts of violence perpetrated against them. Yesterday, over 100 stores along Rue Amar El Kama closed their blinds.

By that act, the merchants were ordering a day-long strike as a sign of protest against the lack of security prevailing in the two districts toward which the malefactors gravitate during the day and even after the breaking of the fast. According to one merchant who did not obey the order, the lack of security and attacks have always existed, but it is only during the month of Ramadan that an attempt is made to sound the alarm about a dangerous menace not confined to the district.

The attackers are known and on record at all police stations, but law enforcement agencies refuse to intervene effectively to put an end to this kind of psychosis once and for all. Rather, they prefer to act—often late—based on complaints filed by a store owner or other vendor. However, one thing is certain: Police patrols have steadily increased in number since Saturday. Squads made up of several law enforcement officers have been deployed near the old Ketchoua mosque.

Their role consists of intervening rapidly in case of aggression or armed attack. Most of the stores closed are

in textile sales or manufacturing, followed by jewelry stores and other profitable activities. "The attackers go after stores best supplied with expensive goods. One merchant was recently robbed of a sum exceeding 90 million centimes just as he was getting ready to go home," we were informed. In addition, price and quality inspectors are enduring the same fate, but now from certain merchants who are making their work difficult. According to Mentouri, president of the Association of Price and Quality Inspectors, agents are daily forced to endure insults and even physical and moral attacks since they are dealing with the interests of bigshots.

In order that they may continue to perform their duties, price inspectors are demanding much-needed protection, meaning once again being given the status of judicial police officer, which confers many prerogatives on them. The inspector may then merely do his job, solely a matter of drafting reports and submitting them to the courts, which then take all necessary measures.

Rarely does a report bear any fruit since all those filed rot in court cabinet drawers.

Economic Stabilization Via Privatization Debated

92AF0602A Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
11 Mar 92 p 1

[Commentary by M. Zabouri: "False Issues"]

[Text] Economic issues seem to be trying to hog center stage. At least when it comes to debate on matters of public concern. Prices and purchasing power, reform of state-owned enterprises, economic recovery and last, privatization are the key issues on which attention is focussed. But a "debate" is sometimes not what it seems.

A close reading of events indicates that the debate on privatization has gotten out of hand. The little phrase the head of government let drop about "lame ducks" and the estimated 400-billion dirham cost of financially restructuring the state-owned enterprises have served as launching pads for a debate that has become absurdly ideologized. Some seem intent on forcing the hand of the authorities and the public, to divide patriotic citizens into partisans and enemies of privatization. There is more than a hint of *deja vu* in this kind of campaign. The purveyors of ultraliberal slogans—who incidentally are poor excuses for liberals—have already made their mark as champions of democratic discourse by defending tooth and nail an electoral process that led us to the brink of theocratic dictatorship. Not so long ago, their preferred tactic was a kind of ideological terrorism, whereby any opposition to the legislative elections was branded "antidemocratic" and "fear of the people's verdict."

Today they point the finger of blame at managers and workers in state-owned enterprises, accusing them of being responsible for chaos, waste, and even corruption.

But let's leave questions of tactics to those who specialize in such maneuvering.

Privatization cannot substitute for restructuring the enterprises. Where is the capitalist who would agree to purchase a state-owned enterprise knowing he would then have to reform it? Unless the state picks up the tab, in which case the resulting monetary creation would generate inflation that would overwhelm the national economy. Even private-sector industrialists would balk at that idea!

The cloak of privatization may hide radically and fundamentally different concepts, interests, and processes pertaining to economic systems dating from various historical epochs.

The problem therefore is not whether to privatize. If some insist on putting that spin on it, it is because they want to re-establish the political conditions that prevailed in the early 1980's, when patriotic citizens were divided and a coalition of heterogeneous interests banded together to promote a reactionary social agenda.

We must guard against underestimating the formidable effectiveness of these maneuvers. They have already begun to have damaging effects: The tripartite has virtually collapsed, the CNSA [National Rescue Committee of Algeria] is marking time, and the risk of increased division and conflict is escalating. Nothing could be more detrimental than false cleavages, at a time when it is essential for all patriotic forces to join together.

Journalist's Work Said Precarious, Threatened

92AF0602B Algiers EL WATAN in French 11 Mar 92
p 1

[Article by Reda Bekkat: "Freedom of Press in Jeopardy"]

[Text] For the crime of publishing a letter to the editor critical of a theatrical sketch, a newspaper editor has been sentenced to a month in prison. The sentence was handed out yesterday in Sidi M'Hamed by the special court for "press defamations and violations," in a case that dates some years back, long before these specialized courts existed.

Of course, the legal action instituted by the author of the controversial sketches was based on an article of the press code, but the gravity of the sentence for what was a "basically professional criticism" shows how precarious journalistic work has become with the advent of extremely repressive "provisions."

This state of affairs has aroused great concern among newsmen, for whom the press code is nothing but a "penal code" that should be rescinded as soon as possible. The evidence on enforcement to date shows that the press code opens the door to all sorts of abuses, often leaving journalists defenseless. But what is a "press violation"?

Less than two years have passed since promulgation of the April 1990 press law, and many legal actions have

already been filed against journalistic professionals. An offense that ironically was almost unheard of not long ago has become so commonplace in the news world it is hard to find a single press organ or publication that has been spared. In just a short time, "press violations" have entered the juridical lexicon.

But such offenses are not even explicitly mentioned in the 1990 press code. Is this tantamount to saying they are as much a novelty to the media as to the judiciary?

Unfortunately, the answer seems to be yes, and the tribunal of Algiers has decided—in response to the large number of complaints filed against journalists and publications—to set up a special court to hear and rule on all matters having to do with press violations.

All these cases, in the unanimous opinion of journalists and jurists, require judicial innovation to interpret "press violations," a class of offense unknown until recent months. Admittedly, journalistic professionals "knew in advance" this was possible with the promulgation of what they considered a new penal code. But they are increasingly worried that "press violation" law will lead to restrictions on the right to inform the public.

The situation is aggravated by resort to police methods in handling press offense cases. More concretely, the new Association of Algerian Journalists (AJA) asserts that "pressure being put on the press and journalists has become intolerable." Instances of judicial abuse of journalists range from "excessive recourse to peremptory summonses before the bench to deprivation of freedom, with committal orders issued against several journalists.

Our still very limited experience in liberalization of the press has led to some problems. Primarily because of inexperience in handling a press theoretically freed from any constraint. Certain articles that have appeared in the press are far from above reproach.

In fact, conveying information is subject, like any other personal action, to the hallowed principle of traditional liberal law whereby "the freedom of any individual ends where the freedom of another begins." But as we have seen, restrictions on these freedoms in liberal societies are so circumscribed it is difficult to clearly define them. And in such societies, it is within this complex web of constraints that lawsuits against journalists must be fought. Some newspapers have even built their reputation on the number of times they have been sued.

As one can imagine, it is even harder to define these constraints in an environment like our own characterized by institutional underdevelopment and the weight of prejudice. Journalists themselves have made mention of this fact—sometimes at considerable cost.

We find the same state of affairs in plaintiffs' abuse of libel allegations against journalists. In theory, libelous writings must leave no "room for doubt." Journalists and editors who have faced such charges, as well as their attorneys, argue that quite often the judges responsible

for hearing such cases are "Arabic-speakers" with limited command of the French language—the language in which most of the disputed articles have been published. This is as much as to say it is impossible, under such conditions, for our magistrates to grasp all the subtleties of the language of Voltaire sufficiently to give fair rulings on the allegedly libelous character of writings and journalistic reports. The example (one among many) reported by Aissa Chenouf, convicted for an article that appeared two years ago, illustrates the disappointments journalists encounter with judges. In effect, the magistrate held that the words reported by Aissa Chenouf were defamatory, without explaining how this was possible! Thus it is primarily a problem of interpretation for our magistrates. All the same, it should not be too difficult for the court to assign these cases to judges fluent in the French language. And there are still some judges around who qualify, contrary to widespread opinion.

Journalists advocate the holding of seminars and classes to bring judges and newsmen together. And all of the latter, whether "organized" in trade unions or professional associations, demand the abrogation of a press code they view as obsolete.

Press, Government Relations 'Deteriorating'

92AF0580A Paris LE MONDE in French 19 Mar 92
p 6

[Article by Georges Marion: "Media Accuse Government of Wanting To Domesticate Them"; first paragraph is LE MONDE introduction]

[Text] Relations between the government and the press were already tense (see LE MONDE, 11 March), and they deteriorated abruptly with the indictment and jailing of Abderrahmane Mahmoudi, editor of L'HEBDO LIBERE, on Tuesday 17 March. These new legal proceedings, which are causing a tremendous stir among members of the media, are occurring in the wake of the indictment of several journalists for libel or defamation, the conviction of the editor of the QUOTIDIEN D'ALGER, and the warrant issued on Monday for the arrest of the editor of SOIR D'ALGERIE.

Algiers—Under a headline denouncing "false judicial officers," L'HEBDO LIBERE published two documents taken from the personnel file of a public prosecutor at the Supreme Court. The first document certified that from 1958 to 1962, the prosecutor in question had been a permanent member of the French federation of the FLN [National Liberation Front], a position entitling one to solid career advantages. The second document said that during the same period, he had been a social security employee in Casablanca. Since those two conflicting documents were contained in the same file, they aroused a few bittersweet comments about the impunity enjoyed by those who do not even take the precaution to be consistent.

When brought before an examining magistrate on Tuesday morning, the editor of L'HEBDO LIBERE was

charged with contempt of court, libel, and false accusation and immediately imprisoned. The examining magistrate seems to have acted on his own, since the Public Prosecutor's Office had not asked to have the editor kept in custody.

When the news became known a few hours later, it stirred up editorial offices. That afternoon, journalists and employees of L'HEBDO LIBERE denounced "a serious precedent in the legal annals concerning press offenses..." and "practices aimed at domesticating the press and denying it its reason for existence: its duty to inform."

Double Talk

For his part, Miloud Brahimi, who is the defendant's lawyer and honorary president of the Algerian Human Rights League, said that "at a time when it is more than ever a question of putting our house in order, the editor of a publication has just been incarcerated because he felt it was his duty to participate in an undertaking for the public good that was expected by all Algerian people and promised by the president of the High State Committee."

In response to a call by the Association of Algerian Journalists (AJA), a stormy general meeting took place at the Press Center that same evening. Another meeting is scheduled for Thursday, and this one may lead to a demonstration in front of Serkadji (formerly Barberousse) Prison, where Mahmoudi is being held.

From the government's standpoint, this incident could not have come at a worse time. Journalists have been complaining for several weeks that they are the victims of "court harassment," and in fact they are being prosecuted as never before by a special branch of the Algiers court known as the "Press Club." One after another, the editors of several newspapers have been convicted in ways that they challenge, and the result has been general meetings and lively reactions by a profession that is beginning to think that the government is now determined to muzzle it.

It is true that the prime minister's remarks on television a few days ago, when he accused the print media of being "manipulated," have done nothing to calm things down. Aware of his blunder and of the worsening atmosphere, Sid Ahmed Ghazali hoped to salve the journalists' hearts by inviting the editors of the main press organs to dinner on Monday evening. Several of them chose to decline the offer. The jailing of L'HEBDO LIBERE's editor a few hours later now enables them to virulently denounce the government's duplicity.

Late Tuesday afternoon, it was the minister of communication and culture, Aboubakr Belkaid, who got involved. Upon being questioned by radio reporters, he tried to put things right by expressing his concern over the "unusual practice" of incarceration for violation of the press laws. "Freedom of the press is the oxygen of democracy, and it must be preserved," he added, saying

that the case should not be interpreted as meaning that the government wishes to undermine that freedom. At that same moment, Ghazali was calling in the minister of justice to try to find a solution likely to calm people down.

But the damage has been done. Obviously the controversy is only beginning, and it is threatening to weaken a government that is already being roundly criticized for its shilly-shallying.

Press Said Not Reporting Internal Problems

92AF0614C Algiers MAG 7 in French 22 Mar 92 p 3

[Article by Zouhir Mebarki: "What Algerians Have Never Been Told: Peace Now!"]

[Text] What do Algerians know about the conflict that has raged in the Western Sahara for 17 years? What have they been told about the real nature of the problem? The single party's official position throughout these many years has essentially been based on two premises: The first presented the Saharans as a persecuted and defenseless people who therefore absolutely had to be protected from "hegemonic Moroccan aims" (second premise) that have long targeted Tindouf.

A third and deliberately subtler element attempted to pin an exploiter image on the monarchic regime. The cultivation of hatred went so far as to create synchronisms in the people's imaginings between, for example, the traditional handkissing and the bent knee of the bootblacks, with all its emotional baggage in the collective memory. However, concerning the Algerian people who wondered (and still wonder) by what vote of the people the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro] Front had come to represent the Saharan people, great care has been taken not to remind them of Boumediene's position as contained in his statements before the Arab League on the eve of the conflict, statements to the effect that he agreed with Mauritania and Morocco on the division of the territory evacuated by Spain. Questions still linger about that reversal. And while every possible effort was made to lend credit to the humanitarian position on the Saharans, there was no question whatsoever of dwelling on the trauma done—on both sides of the border—by the forced military eviction of tens of thousands of Moroccans residing in Algeria. Nor was there any question of pointing out that Algerians residing in Morocco were not victims of the reciprocity rule. Likewise, it was easier to use the demagoguery "of the bootblack" (which, let us recall, went hand in hand with that of the "bourgeois in the Turkish baths," whose enormity and injustice we can measure today) than to say that handkissing there or the kiss on the forehead here are nothing other than great affection and respect expressed differently by an ancestral culture. Ironically enough, we were more familiar with and understood better the Russian-style kiss on the mouth. Nor is that any accident.

None of this is very surprising when one realizes that the Algerians were prevented from learning about their own problems and that only today are they realizing the bitter weight of the foreign debt and all the linguistic difficulty of its rescheduling and its new streamlining.

Having said that much, let us get back to the nature of the problem: What are the real causes of the conflict? Not just anyone will reply to that question when even such an expert on the Maghreb as Paul Balta, who had an "in" with all the parties, confesses that: "There nevertheless remain for me many vague and unexplained areas." Let us leave it to history to shed light on these shadowy zones and move on toward the path of peace. There, the reasons are clear, starting with Maghrebian brotherhood. The explosion of joy that greeted the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan border is still fresh in the minds of everyone. It came just in time to temper the signal expressed some time before by the Algerians, who in October '88 targeted the Polisario information center on Rue Didouche Mourad, the main thoroughfare of Algiers. The economic aspect comes next: The enormous financial burden created by aid can no longer be borne by an Algeria unable to meet its payments. Finally, the construction of the Union of the Arab Maghreb dictates it. Settlement of the conflict will obviously give a beneficial boost and renewed speed to the materialization of this old dream of the people, which has now become an imperative.

The Algerian press bears great responsibility for bringing this about. It has a duty to inform public opinion. Its credibility is at stake.

Another rendezvous with history awaits us.

LIBYA

Senoussi Discusses Background, Extradition Request

92AF0639A Paris LE FIGARO in French 22 Mar 92 p 30

[Interview with al-Qadhdhafi aide Abdallah Senoussi by Pierre Darcourt in Tripoli; date not given. "Senoussi Says He's Blameless and Has Nothing To Hide"]

[Text] Tripoli, 0200. Two burly young men in parkas arrive at the hotel for me. One says to me in English "Our chief, Abdallah Senoussi, is waiting for you." I am to meet the man who is number-one on the most wanted list of the French police. The Mercedes whizzes along the seafront road, whips around the Foreign Affairs Ministry, heads straight south and stops in front of a low-built house nestled under the palms. No sentries are in sight. I am led inside, where I wait for several minutes in a vast and very bright room, sitting cross-legged on a large gray and blue carpet with cushions scattered about. Two portraits adorn the walls. Moammar al-Qadhdhafi and Nasser. In a corner, there is a small table on which an open Koran rests.

Abdallah Senoussi makes his entrance. Animated, likeable, a "handsome kid," his face is almost hidden by a mop of curly black hair. He wears an elegant double-breasted Armani suit over a round-collared shirt. At his side is Salah Madjani, the interpreter, a small, bald-headed, mustached man who wears half-moon glasses and has a degree in arts. He speaks in excellent French.

[Darcourt] Who are you, Abdallah Senoussi?

[Senoussi] I am 40 years old. I was born in Chadji, in Fezzan, several years before the departure of the French troops. After secondary studies I entered the army and was then selected for the Cairo military academy, coming out as a lieutenant in the armored cavalry. I hold the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Libyan Army. I am married and the father of four children. I like sports a lot. I have been known to play a pretty good game of soccer. Whenever I have the time, I love to practice equestrian.

If I had to define my role and functions, I would say I am a confidential agent of the "Guide" and responsible for his personal security.

[Darcourt] Judge Bruguiere has named you in connection with the bombing of the UTA DC-10. What inspired these charges the French judiciary have brought against you?

[Senoussi] The accusation against me is unacceptable. I am an officer, not an assassin. In the exercise of my duties, I have on several occasions met with foreign heads of state, personalities of international renown with whom I maintain close, correct, and trusting relations. All the Western embassies received me and respected me, because I am frank, direct, and faithfully transmit the messages entrusted to me. Now, all of a sudden, my name—and a photograph that makes me look like a gallows bird or something out of an anthropometry class—are given to every news service in the world. I am accused of an unspeakable crime, the destruction in mid-flight of the UTA DC-10, the mass assassination of 170 people, whose bodies, torn to pieces by the explosion of a bomb, were scattered on the sand and rock of the Tenere (desert). They want me to confess to this massacre, which I allegedly ordered from afar like some unfeeling monster. I am indignant, I am floored, I am disgusted at this accusation. You understand? I am determined to stand up, to confront everything, to clear myself of this atrocious calumny.

[Darcourt] Several weeks ago, you said you were prepared to surrender to French justice.

[Senoussi] I never said that. To surrender is to admit one is guilty, whereas I am innocent. I have had it with the incessant harassment of the foreign press. My family is suffering from this campaign, which has gone on for months now. Even my children have been insulted and abused at school and on the public streets. What I said then, I repeat, is that I was prepared to stand before French justice. For two reasons. First of all, because I have nothing to hide and have done nothing wrong.

Next, because I have confidence in the judicial fairness of the country that is the birthplace of human rights. I point out that this decision is a personal one. It concerns only myself. It is the only way I can escape this tyrannical pressure that weighs on me and my loved ones. I want to defend my honor.

[Darcourt] What prevents you from doing so?

[Senoussi] My lawyer, Mr. Gilbault, has advised me against it. Because he believes my freedom of movement in France is not guaranteed. In fact, by issuing an international arrest warrant that is tantamount to a criminal charge, Judge Bruguiere seeks to prevent me from leaving Libya. If I cross the border, I risk being arrested by the police of countries that have signed extradition treaties with France. He has thus decreed a sort of embargo that prevents me from answering the accusations brought against me. Without being allowed to see the case that French justice has prepared against me, I have no way to refute the magistrate's specific charges.

[Darcourt] The charge against you has become an affair of state. Do you think the indictment was brought against you in order to get at Moammar al-Qadhafi?

[Senoussi] If you consider our family ties and my position as his "confidential agent," you might view this action as a thorn under his fingernail. But really my life is of no importance, in comparison to the existence of Libya. The "Guide" cannot be implicated. To us, he is more of an arbiter than a decisionmaker. He is "hadj." He is our ideal. He is a religious believer. He leads a simple, austere life and owns nothing. Contrary to what Westerners say, no one here in Libya would even think of rising up against him.

[Darcourt] How do you explain this unfailing loyalty to Colonel al-Qadhafi over the last 23 years?

[Senoussi] It is always very difficult for Westerners to understand what is happening in Libya. To appreciate this devotion to the "Guide," you have to put yourself in the situation and ambiance of the era that preceded his coming to power. I was a secondary student and remember very clearly what Tripoli was like under old King Idriss. Close by the domed royal palace and the Turkish fort, it was a Western city, designed by Italian colonizers, where the voluptuous luxury of the extravagantly wealthy petroleum lords was insolently displayed. There was nothing but festive villas, nightclubs and casinos, where dollars, whisky, and champagne flowed in profusion. They drove Cadillacs all over town, to show off their beautiful women adorned with jewelry and expensive clothing. The functionaries, the king's confidants, took an active part in the festivities and the "parties."

Corruption and depravity were rampant. The country was swimming on an ocean of oil. The Americans and the British were working a miraculous deposit located almost at ground level less than 150 km from the sea. A

gigantic deposit that extended from Zelten to the coast over millions of hectares. None of this wealth, which the foreigners extracted, was doing anything for our people, whose lives were wretched. No hospitals, few schools. As young high school students, we were first inspired by the events in Egypt, where Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew King Farouk, forced the big feudal landowners to sell their land to the peasants, and nationalized the Suez Canal. Several times a day, my comrades and I gathered to listen to "Voice of the Arabs" on Radio Cairo.

And then came the coup d'état of 1 September 1969 led by Col. al-Qadhdhafi. A coup that was planned in utmost secrecy by the "free officers," it took both foreigners and Libyans completely by surprise. That is when my desire for a military career and my devotion to Col. al-Qadhdhafi were born. I had only one idea in my head at that time: to serve my country, support its revolution, and work one day alongside the man who had given Libya its independence and dignity.

[Darcourt] And you are doing so, it seems, having risen rather rapidly. You even have family ties to Col. al-Qadhdhafi, since you married his wife's younger sister.

[Senoussi] That is true. I live in constant contact with him. In my training as an officer and through working alongside the "Guide," I have acquired solid experience and deeper understanding.

[Darcourt] In your talks, has Col. al-Qadhdhafi ever indicated how seriously he views the threat the United States poses to him?

[Senoussi] I have a memory that dates several years before the 15 April 1986 bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi. We were sitting in the tent drinking green tea. He opened his big atlas and pointed with his finger to the Gulf of Syrtis, then said: "You see, Abdallah, before the revolution, the Americans and English held Tobruk and Tripoli. Two strategic points in the middle of the Mediterranean along a line running straight from Europe to Africa: two ideal positions from which to surveil the skies and the sea and keep an eye on both continents. In Tripoli, the Americans had the largest air base ever built outside the United States: Wheelus Air Base. About 10,000 men were stationed there. Spy planes and strategic bombers left from Wheelus night and day to comb the skies surrounding the USSR. The Americans will never forgive us for expelling them from Wheelus Air Base and taking control of our oil wealth. One day, their airplanes will return and try to crush us."

That analysis was prescient. The risk of a new strike cannot be dismissed.

MAURITANIA

Government, Opposition Parties Relations Discussed

92AF0534A Paris LE MONDE in French 6 Mar 92 p 5

[Article by Jacques de Barrin: "Mauritania: Democracy Resistant to Racial Tensions"]

[Text] Nouakchott—The sound system was blaring and the paper lanterns were flickering, but in the tent serving as Tijani Ould Kerim's headquarters near downtown Nouakchott, members of his tribe, disguised as campaign aides, were squatting on rugs and sipping tea to kill time. There was hardly anyone there to hear them extol the virtues of the "change with stability," which that parliamentary candidate had made the leitmotiv of his campaign—a campaign being conducted under the banner of the Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS), the president's party.

The natives, who are unaccustomed to visiting polling booths, were called to the ballot box in July to adopt a constitution and again in January to choose the chief of state. Now they are being called upon to choose their representatives in the National Assembly. The interest they have shown so far in this brandnew game called democracy seems to be wearing thin. The "massive and active" boycott by the opposition parties is in fact robbing this third election of its excitement.

'Monstrous Fraud'

Having taken power in December 1984 by means of a putsch, Colonel Maaouya Ould Taya has kept his word. He promised in May 1991 that political life would be normalized "no later than mid-1992" (see LE MONDE, 8 May). He has therefore rushed things in order to take his opponents by surprise. "The president has managed the democratic process in an unfair and unilateral manner, his only concern being to perpetuate himself and his regime in power," complains Bechir El Hassen, spokesman for the Union of Democratic Forces (UFD), which is the main opposition party.

Was it a good idea, despite everything, to join in this democratic dance with its compulsory choreography? The opposition eventually took the plunge by supporting a presidential candidate "without a party." Its candidate, who had come straight from the World Bank, was Ahmed Ould Daddah, the brother of Mauritania's first chief of state. "It was necessary to respond to the population's desire for change and make democracy irreversible," explains Mohameden Ould Babah, first coordinator of the UFD. "Besides, we thought we would win."

It was a disappointed hope: although opposition candidates generally outdid Col. Ould Taya in the southern part of the country and in the cities, he beat his challenger in the total vote (62.65 percent to 32.75 percent). Ould Daddah is still angry today. He says: "There was

monstrous fraud: I should have been elected with over 60 percent of the vote." And he even remembers the possibility of a "coup d'etat" based on tank movements in Nouakchott in the hours after the polls closed.

One thing is certain and, in fact, scarcely surprising: the irregularities were numerous and flagrant. Not all of them were due to the administration's lack of experience and resources—far from it. For example, among other irregularities, the UFD found that in 10 cities, there were more registered voters than there were people of voting age, and that there were two small towns in which the number of registered voters even exceeded the total population!

The chief of state defends himself by saying: "If there was fraud, it favored my opponent." And he adds, also with no chance of being believed: "We did not have much time to get organized because the opposition hurried us." Moustapha Ould Abdeirrahmane, who was one of the organizers of the presidential campaign and minister of water supply, went so far as to hail as a "considerable success the fact that in the local context, Ould Daddah was able to obtain nearly one-third of the vote on his first try." In his opinion, that should "help strengthen the democratic process."

The opposition parties did not see it that way, and they laid down 23 conditions for their participation in legislative elections that would have to be more transparent than the presidential election had been. On being bluntly turned down by Col. Ould Taya, they responded, although not without thinking it over—voting projections indicated that they would win 20 out of 79 seats—by declaring a boycott of the election. "Even though we challenge the legitimacy of the institutions, we are not going to create a second power," says El Hassen. "We are setting a date for the future."

The most activist opponents feel that the "new" government will very quickly prove incapable of responding to the political and economic challenges that the country must confront. "It may be overwhelmed," says Ould Daddah. "Things may get serious," says Ould Babah. Others such as Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, leader of the anti-establishment black Moors, are more explicit. A born orator, Ould Boulkheir is threatening to defy the president in the streets—at the risk of prompting the army to leave its barracks again, if indeed it is on the way to returning to them.

Did the regime's opponents make a political mistake by withdrawing into their tents? In any case, one of the real reasons for this boycott has to do with the fact that they must put their own house in order before becoming further involved in the democratic process. "We are not in a hurry. We have many problems to solve before we take power," Ould Babah admits. "It would have been very burdensome to assume power now. Col. Ould Taya could have booby-trapped us."

Ethnic and ideological quarrels as well as conflicts between generations are in fact agitating the young UFD.

"While remaining vigilant and critical, we are going to organize and unify ourselves," says Ould Daddah. He presents himself as the "coordinator" of the seven groups that supported his candidacy, although the role that he intends to play or will be allowed to play within the opposition is not known.

The chief of state describes that disparate opposition as being "self-proclaimed" since, according to him, "it refuses to base its legitimacy on the ballot box." He suspects it of wanting to take power by force if it is unable to do so peacefully. "It has not changed its plans," he says regretfully, "and is reacting as though Mauritania were still living under a military regime."

Col. Ould Taya's opponents retort that his past behavior disqualifies him from heading up the change to come. He will remain the prisoner of his tribal and military entourage. For his part, he swears to heaven that he has become a new man: "In a few months' time, I have met more Mauritians, traveled more in the country's interior, and delivered more speeches than in the past seven years," confesses the secretive and uncommunicative former officer. "From now on I will be forced to pay much more attention to what I do."

Safeguards and Prevarication

For lack of anything better, at least a democracy with a strong ethnic coloring is being put in place. "The tribes are settling their scores through the legislative elections," says a local observer. Here in Nouadhibou, the country's second-largest city, the Ouled Delims support the PRDS candidate, while the Teknas support an "independent" candidate. The odds are that once transformed into honorable members of Parliament, those notables will make life difficult for the government and have no concern other than to distribute the state's meager subsidies to their constituents.

That leaves a number of democratic achievements—a constitution with safeguards, opposition parties, and an independent press—which will constrain the "new" chief of state to no longer govern entirely as he has in the past. In the eyes of the white Moors, the government may no longer be in a position to pursue a policy of repressing the black Moors and "denying them responsible positions."¹ "This Mauritania with its exclusions is something that more and more people of all ethnic groups here do not want anymore," says attorney Diabira Maroufa, a lawyer in Nouakchott.

Babacar Alpha, a former minister, insists: "Mauritania's problems will not be solved by setting up democratic institutions amounting to no more than prevarication and pretense. The real problem, the solution of which requires a national consensus, is still that of the coexistence of the races on an equal footing."

"Mauritania is Arab," the chief of state had said in the midst of his election campaign. He admits now that it is "Arabo-African," but then adds immediately that "any

parity is impossible because the majority of the population is Arab." The fate of the black African community is something that Ould Abdeirrahmane mentions in terms of "solicitude" and "dialogue" but never under any circumstances in terms of sharing power.

"The future must be considered seriously." That slogan, written on a banner decorating Tijani Ould Kerim's "headquarters," leaves young cadre Mohamed perplexed. Although he is a white Moor, he dreams of a more fraternal Mauritania. But he cannot bring himself to believe in it. "I don't understand it at all," he confides sadly. "How will we ever get along with each other when we have been going at each other for 30 years?"

Footnote

1. According to estimates, the population is divided as follows: 40 percent black Moors (Haratin), 30 percent white Moors (Bidan), and 30 percent black Africans, mainly of the Toucouleur ethnic group.

SAUDI ARABIA

First Sign of Fissure Within Wahhabism Claimed

92AE0281A Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 3 Mar 92 p 13

[Article by Hamzah al-Hasan: "Saudi Internal Situation, First Wahhabi Opposition to Ruling Family"]

[Text] In the most recent issue of AL-JAZIRAH AL-ARABIYAH [THE ARAB PENINSULA], a London-based magazine that serves as the voice of Saudi opposition circles—businessmen and graduates of Western institutions who are demanding democratic reforms—there is an analysis of the contest within Wahhabi religious circles and of the emergence, for the first time, of the idea of *takfir* [repudiation on grounds of unbelief] directed against the ruling family.

The country was preoccupied all last month with the denunciations for infidelity that recently surfaced within the religious Salafi current, particularly in the capital of Riyadh, where the most important aspect of the political struggle is centered at the present time.

The call for *takfir* against the Saudi state is the most recent development in the worsening conflict between the religious current and the government since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, which saw the two sides taking divergent positions, the government tolerating America's decision to mass its forces on Saudi territory to strike Iraq; and the religious current colliding with the restrictions imposed on the movements of its activists. The police, in fact, arrested many young activists of the religious current, and many of its important personalities were forbidden to travel or preach. Repercussions of the conflict provided fertile soil for the growth of the call for *takfir*.

Furthermore, this trend paves the way for what can be considered the first serious split against the official

leadership of the Wahhabi sect, a sect which—apparently, at least—has hitherto preserved a reasonable amount of unity.

As usual, the government was so surprised that the supporters of the charge of infidelity were numerous, that it called for the intervention of Shaykh 'Abd-al-'Aziz Bin-Baz, the senior official religious scholar; along with the General Intelligence Administration, in the person of its chief, Prince Turki al-Faysal. Rarely has this agency intervened so openly in an internal matter like a conflict between various parties in the religious current.

Shaykh al-Baz criticized the recent charge and called for moderation and an end to fomenting civil strife. Prince Turki spoke at many gatherings, addressing his words to prominent personalities in the Salafi movement, warning that the government would confront the call by the harshest means. "Gray beards," so he was quoted as saying, "will win no one mercy if matters go so far as declaring members of the royal family infidels."

Clearly, it was the sensitivity of the issue that led the government to highlight the statement of Shaykh al-Baz and repeat his presentation on radio and television, as well as in the domestic press.

The issue came to the fore when zealous members of the Salafi movement distributed a secret printing of the book *Al-Kawashif al-Jaliyah fi Kufr al-Dawlah al-Sa'udiyah* ("Clear Revelations of the Unbelief of the Saudi State"). The book was written by a religious scholar and published under the name (apparently a pseudonym) of Murshid 'Abd-al-'Aziz ibn-Sulayman al-Najdi.

The book was first printed in Peshawar, the city where the camps of the Afghan mujahidin are located on the northern border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Dozens of Saudi citizens who chose to emigrate or fled following threats of arrest for political reasons are living there. A few copies of this edition slipped into the kingdom. However, the book was reprinted domestically, and hundreds of copies of it were distributed at a time when supporters of this trend were presenting arguments for the infidelity of high officials in the government, including the king and senior princes, not exempting some of the religious scholars who work in government agencies.

The issue began to be raised at private sessions and forums that Salafi activists normally held in mosques or even in college dormitory rooms. Soon, however, the sessions became more widespread, until everyone was talking about them at home and even in government offices. One reason the idea spread and became a topic of discussion so rapidly was that for the first time it dealt with prominent persons in the royal family and certain important men of religion classified as followers of the dynasty, such as Shaykh Salih (al-Lahidan), a member of the College of Senior Ulema and head of the Higher Judicial Council.

Never before had a follower of the Wahhabi sect, with the possible exception of scattered hints in the essays of the martyr Juhayman al-'Utaybi, spoken about the infidelity of any of the kings of the Saudi family, who were always considered protectors of the sect and rulers deserving obedience. The most that had been said about certain princes was that they were dissolute, something that according to the current classification in religious circles does not place a person outside the bounds of Islam. This sudden escalation of the conflict to the highest degree was what fanned the flames of the idea and transformed it overnight into the talk of great and small.

Background of the Conflict

Takfir [charging with infidelity or unbelief, repudiating for infidelity or unbelief] regarding society—at least parts of society—is nothing new in the life of the country. Neither is it new in Islamic societies generally, though at no time, ancient or modern, was it the object of welcome or esteem. In the modern Islamic world this attitude usually has developed amid crises, especially when certain religious activists reach a dead end because of social isolation or government repression, or at least are unable to express their view and participate in society on an equal footing with other groups. Rarely has *takfir* become the basis of religious action based on a theory of *jihad* [holy war] or “promoting virtue and suppressing vice” independently of surrounding conditions marked by extreme crisis and lack of clear vision and hope for change.

As for the kingdom's Salafi movement, which now is witnessing an intense conflict between those who preach *takfir* and those who do not, the appearance and growth of this attitude has many historical and doctrinal justifications, to say nothing of favorable circumstances in the political and social sphere. We would not be wrong to say that repudiating transgressors as infidels is the most precise expression of the officially espoused religious doctrine, although the current charge of infidelity is directed mainly against the very government that espouses and protects the doctrine within which this attitude flourishes.

Religious scholars make a juristic distinction between two kinds of infidelity [*kufr*]: infidelity of act, which does not place a person outside the religious community, and infidelity of belief, which places a person outside Islam. Until the present time, almost all Muslim scholars have eschewed applying the term *kufr*, which implies separation from the religious community, to any person born of Muslim parents, save in rare cases, such as the British writer Salman Rushdie. Otherwise, the utmost said about those condemned for *kufr* has been that they are “infidels in act.” According to the conventional point of view, this is a degree of immorality [*fisq*] that does not entail the punishment for apostasy [*riddah*]. This cautiousness has included even people who publicly voiced hostility to Islam or forcibly prevented the

holding of religious rites. Religious scholars have categorized their unbelief as “infidelity of act,” branding the person with immorality, but not infidelity. This distinction, particularly the reluctance to brand anyone with “infidelity of belief,” which would pave the way for pronouncing the person an apostate and demanding implementation of the death penalty for apostasy, is one of the barriers scholars have erected to prevent unqualified persons from abusing the rules and attributing infidelity to anyone without careful investigation. Ultimately, the matter involves Muslim lives and the safety of the community from fragmentation; for it would be easy for anyone to dig up enough evidence to prove that a certain person, based on some of his words or actions, had left the faith, were it not for this rigorousness and cautiousness. The fear that accusations of infidelity would become a plaything for ordinary people and a weapon to fragment society and monopolize religion was what led Muslim scholars of all schools to extreme caution in dealing with the subject and to the most stringent precautions before branding anyone with infidelity. This cautiousness has led to preservation of the Islamic label for a large number of scoffers and violators of Islam, not to mention those who fail to observe its precepts, throughout history up to the present. The one group that discarded this high degree of caution were the scholars of the Wahhabi sect, who did not hesitate to attach the label of “infidelity of belief” to many of their political or doctrinal opponents. Thus they pronounced all Sufi sects, Shiism, the Zaydi sect, and the Ibadi sect to be invalid. In politics, charges involving *takfir* were leveled at the Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi in 1982, Iraq's President Saddam Husayn late in 1990, and the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1987.

There were a number of reasons why the sect's adherents leveled charges of infidelity so readily. For example, the range within which certain rules of jurisprudence were objectively applied was widened, and circumspection in pronouncing judgments was put aside. Matters subject to condemnation as “innovation” were broadened to include everything not instituted in the time of the prophet and his companions. Casual acceptance of traditions recognized in various legal schools was forbidden, and they were categorized as “innovation.” The charge of “innovation” [*bid'ah*] was taken to the greatest lengths, and “innovation” was considered a kind of unbelief. Furthermore, the subjects for which a ruling of “infidelity of act” could be pronounced were expanded, and some of them were reclassified as “infidelity of belief,” equivalent to apostasy.

In the Arab world, Egypt was the only country that saw the appearance of a relatively broad movement based on the philosophy of repudiating society as infidel and separating from it. In various parts of the Islamic world calls were constantly surfacing holding that rulers hostile to the faith or lax toward the propagation of innovation were infidels. Not even the Iranian regime with its very conservative religious base was safe from such a charge.

Soon after the victory of the revolution, it faced a movement calling itself Furqan, which deemed the rulers infidels on the ground that they had established a government according to a pattern of positive law without root in legislation, thereby leaving the religious community. (Ordinary people, on the other hand, were merely considered followers led astray, and hence not to be termed infidels.) On the basis of this charge of infidelity, Furqan assassinated many prominent religious figures in the revolution who were classified as its intellectual theoreticians, for example Ayatollah Murtaza Motahhari and Hojjatolislam Mohammad Mofattah.

Although many Muslim scholars lean toward the idea of repudiating an immoral ruler for infidelity, most of them do not think it right to spread the idea generally, given that this age is one of civil strife—an age in which the bounds between absolute truth and absolute falsehood are very flexible.

Unfortunately, the historical circumstances of the appearance of calls for *takfir* all indicate that these calls arise in response to political changes. In essence they are an expression of a political position and cannot be ascribed to a theoretical basis independent of the political environment, firm in its objective proofs, or derived from rules of the Shari'ah recognized in standard works. The market for *takfir* finds customers only in political crises, especially among those whose expectations have been blocked, so that they find no other course but to raise the level of conflict to the highest possible degree—namely, a summons to war—if only verbally. Because this is something not normally accepted in the traditions of Islamic law, it had to be supported with appropriate theoretical proofs. Thus emerged the idea of *takfir*. It is the theoretical preparation for a call to war against those branded as infidels.

The trend of *takfir* now spreading in the country reproduces the thinking of the Wahhabi sect with a change of direction. In modern history, the Saudi state has seen at least two cases in which war was declared against the sovereign power on the ground of *takfir*. The first case was the struggle of the Ikhwan, led by the late Faysal al-Dawish, with the founder of the state, King 'Abd-al-'Aziz, in 1930. The second was the occupation, also by the Ikhwan, of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca under the leadership of the martyr Juhayman al-'Utaybi in November 1979. The new call openly venerates these earlier two calls by the Ikhwan. The author of *Al-Kawashif al-Jaliyah* chose to preface his book with a famous saying of Sultan bin Bijad, a leader of the first Ikhwan movement: "If we are killed, Jews and Christians will jostle each other in the streets of Riyadh." The presence of foreign forces in the kingdom during the Gulf crisis was the fuse that ignited the conflict and led to the emergence of the new concept of *takfir*.

How far?

How far will those who advocate *takfir* against the Saudi state go in the confrontation? How will the government

react to this dangerous attitude? What repercussions could this have for existing relations between the sect and the state?

The present level of conflict between the religious current and the government may not have peaked. In our estimate, the conflict has not reached the most critical points—the stage at which each side finds itself facing a pitched battle against the other. However, there is no doubt that this door will lead only to that path, if the government decides to proceed with its current policies in the area of relations with the country's political forces. From present indications, it appears that the government will continue to rule for an additional period in the future. These policies are what has brought the country to its current state of extreme tension.

Hopes had been fixed on promised political reforms. They were to be a way to ease the tensions, particularly by reshaping the form and substance of relations between citizens and government. However, the information that has leaked out thus far about the proposed formulas for reform does not give a positive impression. According to sources close to the committee charged with drafting the statute for the consultative council, King Fahd remains firm on the subject of powers to be delegated to the consultative council and the provincial councils. The committee, chaired by Prince Nayif, had recommended giving the council power to make laws without recourse to the Council of Ministers, debate the draft budget submitted by the Council of Ministers, and oversee government spending. However, the king insisted that the consultative council be subordinate to the Council of Ministers, which the king heads by law. He was particularly insistent that financial decisions must remain entrusted to the king personally. As a result, the provisions relating to the powers of the [consultative] council had to be redrafted a number of times.

Many people in the country do not seem optimistic about the new reforms, though they have turned into further material for the conflict between the government and the religious line. The latter feels that the council might be a justification for eliminating some religious figures, especially the more zealous ones.

In any case, it does not appear that the government is committed to a reform that would lead to opening the door for political forces to enjoy even partial freedom of action. Indeed, it has arrested many activists of the religious current, including many clergymen and preachers who have called for submitting the proposed political reform programs to public opinion before promulgating them officially. This shows that the method followed thus far of dealing sternly with opponents will remain the rule.

If matters continue moving in this direction, we must expect further deterioration in relations between the country's political forces and the government. This of

course includes an increase in the wave of *takfir*, which today is finding constantly a expanding place in circles of citizens.

Clearly, the government's options are very limited. It can respond to popular demands to allow general freedoms and open the way for all forces to express themselves within the framework of the law, or it can risk a pitched battle with the opposition, especially the more zealous forces within it. The latter, apparently, is more probable. The government remains confident of its ability to win in the confrontation, but it will certainly be a short-term and very costly victory that will lead to the opposition's taking a different shape and regrouping. The most conspicuous victim of this may be the religious base on which the government has hitherto relied as a foundation of legitimacy to rule.

TUNISIA

Revival of Opposition Parties' Momentum Advised

92AF0554A Tunis LE TEMPS in French 2 Mar 92 p 2

[Article by Ridha Kefi: "Opposition: The Opposite of Decoration"]

[Text] To prove to itself that it still exists, the opposition has long relied on the calculated indulgence of the written press—which is frightened by any possibility of empty space—and also on frequent invitations for interviews.

Today, even though it is tardy in resuming the function of challenger, the opposition knows it must justify the role that moreover has been rather generously accorded it, and not by issuing lapidary and timorous press releases but by having a stock of ideas and actions that come to grips with the realities of our country and the concerns of its citizens.

Because it has served for a decade as mere decoration—often constituting an annoyance, but one that could be dismantled at any moment—the opposition finally finds itself at a crossroads, and its survival will depend in large measure on the responses it will be able to find to the many questions that the public is posing to it—a public that is outwardly silent and resigned but is nonetheless skeptical if not actually redoubtable, if we are to judge from its frequent rampages and unreasonable angry flareups of which we have already had bloody examples on at least two occasions of very unhappy memory: 26 January 1978 and 4 January 1984.

The Head and the Feet

To produce a different discourse, a discourse that is capable of mobilizing people as well as assembling them: that is what the "oppositions" currently populating the national political scene are being called on to do. These oppositions appear to have been roused from their torpor by a sudden concern for popular legitimacy—the consequence of a political redeployment that will at last

enable them to fill several empty compartments, to have status, and perhaps to have a real impact on national and regional politics.

Unable initially to aspire to...governmental power, having neither the profile nor the means to exercise that power fully, the opposition appears to have become aware of its own limitations and to be revising its ambitions downward. A "humility cure" would, on the whole, be quite beneficial from the perspective of a new departure, because what is needed is not so much to set the bar very, very high as to be able to jump. For that reason, good intentions are not enough—far from it—when it is the legs that are grievously lacking: in other words, what is lacking is a secure and dependable "rank and file" on which to rely at the opportune moment.

Because people cannot walk on their heads, quarrels over leadership—when the people have no real stake in those quarrels—appear to us to be ridiculous and "outrageous"! We therefore believe that a courageous resumption of the role of challenger will appeal to people's intelligence rather than to their petty and aggressive impulses. We believe this is the best therapy because it is the most homeopathic and the most humanly endurable, in view of the fact that surgery is always painful and often risky.

A resumption of the challenger's role; self-criticism; and a redefinition of objectives, strategies, and priorities.... These are a few key words in a program of action that the opposition must adopt in order to renew itself, deal with its internal shortcomings, take the measure of the external pressures, and—fortified by a serene awareness of its capabilities and its limitations—find a new role to play in a context where heretofore it has played the role of a superfluous element that always fails to do its job.

The Task of Contradiction

This revival of the opposition—and the reinforcement of its role—do not relate to the opposition as such but rather to the nation's political class as a whole and to the entire civilian society, whose democratic and liberal program continues to be dependent in large measure on that force for regulation and mediation that is provided by every organized opposition in a healthy body politic.

The world does not evolve in a climate of redundancy but rather through the process of dialectical negation, whose salutary results have been observed worldwide ever since Hegel and Marx, because less progress is achieved through imitative (cancerous!) repetition than through the negative (and so regenerative!) work accomplished through the concept of difference—the matrix of all positive change for the future.

It is therefore the future of our country that is at stake in the current debate concerning the role of the opposition, its current configuration, and its propensities for change.

Background on UGTT Differences Discussed

Sahbani Gives Anniversary Speech

92AF0556A Tunis LES ANNONCES in Arabic
24 Jan 92 p 6

[Article: "Socialism Will Not Die; Momentous Events Among Us"]

[Text] The speech delivered by the secretary general of the General Union of Tunisian Workers [UGTT], Ismael Sahbani, on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the founding of the UGTT, caught the attention of many, because of the positions on national, labor, and international dimensions that it contained.

What did this speech contain, and what were the reactions of various social and political circles?

In the presence of thousands of unionists and many guests representing Arab Maghreb Union [UMA] organizations, the UGTT secretary general delivered a speech that enjoyed the acceptance of a majority of those present, because of its positive forging of a strategic view of union labor in light of international changes and national challenges.

Union Labor Invariables: Independence, Unity, Democracy

Sahbani began his speech with the founding of the UGTT, which chose as its motto "Independence of national union labor in Tunisia," in order to stress that unionists have fashioned from this motto a struggle program that has been translated into two phases: the struggle against French colonialism; and the phase of economic and social construction, laying a foundation for a democratic society free from all manifestations of violence and extremism.

After his review of the many sacrifices made by unionists, led by Hechad, [Eltalili], and Achour, Sahbani reiterated his emphasis on the invariables of union labor: independence, unity, and democracy, and the extent of the cohesion of this trio without any wavering, neither in independence, nor in unity, nor in democracy.

Socialist Option Will Not Vanish

Later, Sahbani touched on international changes, the future of the union movement in the world, and the mutterings of some here and there about the Socialist reversal, as well as skeptical remarks regarding the usefulness of union labor.

In this regard, Sahbani said that certain authorities both within and outside the country have dealt with this event with a backward, vengeful logic, for the purpose of further exploiting workers and depriving them of their rights.

He made it clear that the downfall of certain political systems in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union does

not constitute the fall of the Socialist alternative, nor does it constitute a reversal for union labor. He emphasized that wasteful economic liberalism is not a means of salvation for mankind, citing the tragedies of major capitalist groupings.

Sahbani stressed that recent international events support the workers' conviction that it was necessary to establish strong union movements to defend workers' interests against capitalist greed and global monopolistic companies that plunder workers and peoples.

Amid heated applause, Sahbani went on to tell those authorities: "The victory, as well as all claims about reversing social legislation, and even the economic structure that accompanied it, will have no substantive results or success, so that I don't even have to mention that they are doomed to failure."

Our People Yearn for Social Justice

Sahbani called for balance and composure, which require patience without slipping into fanaticism, so that we can have defined economic expansion. He emphasized that "Tunisia's special qualities, and our people's legacy and aspirations for social justice, make it incumbent upon us to create a Tunisian model compatible with our people's nature."

"The public sector is Tunisia's pride, and [I'm certain] that the social parties will put the interests of the nation above narrow group interests."

Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Algeria

The UGTT secretary general also touched on the intifadah of the Palestinian people in their struggle against the Zionist foe, and on the fight to break the blockade on Iraq, in addition to standing beside the Libyan Jamahiriyyah, which is still being subjected to imperialist provocation and threats. He stressed that Tunisian workers should stand beside their Algerian brothers—workers and people—in achieving their legitimate goals in progress and freedom.

Strong Union Movement Against Unjust Capitalism

Sahbani reiterated his discussion of the rumors circulated by certain capitalist circles about the Eastern camp's collapse and the defeat of Socialism and social justice, stressing that these principles had formed the main fulcrum for the union struggle since its inception.

Sahbani added: "Circulating such allegations as these, while international monetary institutions simultaneously apply pressure to liberalize the economies of Third World countries by means of programs of structural reforms and reducing state intervention in social services fields, is aimed at stunting the growth of unions and the size of their role, shaking workers' confidence in union labor, and clothing noble union ideals and principles in reactionary and backward attire."

Sahbani cited the distinguished position that union labor has occupied in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America, its contributions to democracy and to strengthening the bases of independent union labor in order to implement the claims of capitalists and international monetary and banking circles.

Sahbani concluded his speech by saying: "The factors that forecast a union renewal will bring labor and the forces of labor back to its worthy position. It will be able to sharpen the determination of workers and the toiling masses to mobilize for the victory of justice, democracy, and human rights."

Union, Old and Young

Regardless of the [word missing] of those unionists present, Sahbani's speech during the celebration of the 46th anniversary of the UGTT's establishment was repeated for the working youth, who are about to [word illegible] claims of capitalism and the false rumors of the forces of injustice.

Administrative Positions Reviewed

92AF0556B Tunis LES ANNONCES in Arabic
3 Jan 92 p 9

[Article by [al-Tay] al-Haraghi]: "UGTT: Administrative Decisions, Available and Required"]

[Text] When the UGTT's [General Union of Tunisian Workers] Administrative Board was recently convened, the circumstances were critical, despite Secretary General Ismael Sahbani's insistence that "its recent meeting was routine." Let us look at that morning, 29 December 1991.

Circumstances were critical, because the political scene had experienced a significant decline in the position of eminent people in Tunisia, especially certain union officials who were among those who signed the appeal to the president criticizing the status of prominent personalities in the country.

Circumstances were critical in terms of the continued campaign against the UGTT, because of union demands being put forth, or is this only a non-election campaign? Perhaps it is before its time.

Circumstances were delicate, since they coincided with a renewal of the basic union structure and the resulting change in the fabric of the unions, along with the possibility of shifting alliances. Nevertheless, all the conferences pertaining to renewal saw attempts to infiltrate many anti-labor elements. There was not the sympathy for the administration that has been evident at other times. It is not a neutral party, nor does it believe in the principle of appealing to the ballot box.

Circumstances were delicate in terms of the continuation of the elite's conspicuous attack. They have exploited every occasion to declare their hostility to all those who

do not believe in the benefits of privatization, flexible employment, and the need for forcible dismissal of workers in all institutions.

Finally, circumstances were critical, inasmuch as the Administrative Board meeting coincided with the Chamber of Deputies' debate regarding the state budget, and the dedication of the first year of the Eighth [Five-Year] Plan.

These circumstances are cumulative. These union and political factors dictate—and have dictated—to the Administrative Board, which convened on 23 and 24 December 1991, to react to all these matters, some of them objective and others subjective. In our opinion, it was not possible for the Administrative Board to cross the red line; it was only possible for the Administrative Board to deal with all these problems by studying them and taking action as required.

Administrative Board and the Eighth Plan

The Eighth Plan has caused considerable debate, especially on questions directly affecting unionists. Workers grumble about legislating privatization, flexibility of employment, pressure on the policy of appointment, and retreat from all the gains that workers have extracted through enormous sacrifices. It is evident that authorizing structural reforms only means—in the minds of the upper crust—striking at the public sector and using privatization as a magical solution for all the problems that affect institutions. The workers' grumbling is not spur of the moment. On the contrary, the recent National Council, which looked at all these problems, only summarized what unionists have been calling for at every opportunity.

Workers are very positive that the Administrative Board will reject the privatization campaign and the blatantly liberal movement, which would burden the workers with its consequences. However, is it not our right—as unionists—to be concerned with the organization's life and the workers' fate? Isn't it our right to question operational planning, in order to challenge the alienation policy? Isn't it our right to point out the importance of stimulating the union through a practical alliance of workers, through intensifying public meetings, union forums, and organized rallies, so that the Administrative Board does not nullify the position of the union rank and file, to which the decision for all problems should revert?

In our opinion, it is not desirable for the decision-making authority to be content with merely registering the position without indicating practical ways of nullifying the alienation process. This was done despite the fact that, in an interview conducted by the newspaper AL-SABAH [THE MORNING] on 29 November 1991, the secretary general again referred to the fact that the UGTT is not interested in merely registering positions. If this affair does not pertain merely to registering a position—which is what we sincerely want—what is required is to compel all union cadre to translate the

Administrative Board's decisions into action and pressure for negotiations with the government about all pending problems: alienation, privatization, legislation, and dismissal.

Since we are emphasizing these practical questions, there is no minimum bid. It is important for us to stress that so long as all words are considered in light of some that search for disparity, haggling, and intervening in the organization's internal affairs, why not fish in troubled waters, so that they will be happy, since we are exercising our right to criticize, and so that we know—history has witnessed that—most of those who defend the UGTT are those who were always in the vanguard of those critical of what has begun to be an error in the UGTT's directions.

Increase in Prices, Fear of Inflation

On several occasions, we have pointed out that the continual increase in prices has violated the agreement signed between the UGTT and the government. We have explained that increased wages—any increase—has no meaning, unless the increase is accompanied by an end to the successive price hikes, and that the wage/price competition robs agreements of their credibility, or rather, perhaps some increases in wages have only been a compensation for a previous imbalance. Suffice it to say that the unexpected events of May 1991 were because of the protests of many unionists over the decline in purchasing power. However, union leadership at that time only saw a distorted and artificial intent, despite the fact that the situation cried out for just the opposite. From a position of responsibility, we emphasize that the demand to open negotiations between the UGTT and the government to look into the question of wages has come too late. The agreements were violated not long after they were signed. Nevertheless, the question also requires an actual willingness to defend the workers' purchasing power. It is not a question of intentions as much as it is one of mobilizing the workers and imposing serious negotiations in which the UGTT can defend its members' interests, ensuring its credibility and fighting spirit.

Respect for Union Labor

For some time, union labor has been subjected to harassment, not the least of which are restrictions on union meetings in a number of institutions, restrictions against unionists, and interference from non-union parties in attempts to influence the course of union elections (during the renewal of the basic unions). This infiltration has the sympathy of the administration and angers the unionists, because they know that some of these elements that no longer believe in the need for rule by ballot box were among those who gave the UGTT in the most vicious attack that it has ever experienced.

Nevertheless, certain parties are trying, in crazy campaigns, to replace the unions and frighten workers. The purpose is to drive them away from union membership.

Accordingly, the Administrative Board has emphasized the need to consider the union as a single party and a single structure, pursuing dialogue with the administration and settling all the workers' problems. The administration is convinced that what is required is to marginalize the union—if success is foreordained—which would only lead to a buildup of problems and a tense social climate. What does that matter to those who consider the possibility of representing workers, except belief in the arbitration of elections and the judgement of workers, who know more than anyone else who really defends them on all occasions, and who see in the union only a position to serve their own objectives and who have no connection with the workers' concerns.

These infiltration attempts require mobilizing all organizations and cadres, imposing discipline, and governing everyone legally by the basic law and by-laws, using them as the authority for everyone. It is clear that keeping up with the higher echelons for the renewal process is a necessity, in order to ensure the normal course of the election process, and so that some do not exploit this to hinder the conferences' actions, as has occurred in previous conferences. We have referred to some of them in a previous article.

Pertaining to the exercise of union rights, which is guaranteed by the law and the constitution, unionists have always stressed the need to stipulate freedom of rights in the basic law, so that they do not continue to be subjected to arbitrary moods and changes of political climate.

Revising Section 62 of the By-Laws

If some consider revising Section 62 of the by-laws a positive matter aimed at maintaining union stability, familiarity with all the ramifications of that revision raise questions. We know that many observers will be content to confirm that the Administrative Board has the right—among its inherent functions—to revise the basic law. However, the question is not limited to formalism. Everyone knows the influence of the problem of Gafsa. How much time does it take to discuss it during a meeting of the expanded Executive Board? Everyone knows the volume of words that have been spoken about that problem. No one can ignore what might result from renewal within the structure. Many accusations have been directed against certain union officials, pertaining to attempts to influence the course of events in Gafsa Province. It is clear to those who are not trying to conceal the facts that altering the basic law is like a thread, and has helped to cause a split within the UGTT's provincial general secretary in Gafsa—in spite of everyone.

The problem is not a problem of revision, but rather, it is subjecting the basic law to specific circumstances and then generalizing these circumstances by using this specific split in Gafsa. Nevertheless, the fundamental question was: Could it be settled in the provinces without being submitted to a general Administrative Board

which, presumably, would not legally be a party to the union's disputes. Isn't the law of the majority currently a valid law in all questions? What is the foreordained fate of a secretary general who will be—someday—in the minority? Would he be able to fulfill his responsibilities as usual, so long as the revision includes the Secretariat General, even if it were the simple minority of a secretary general? What if this union charter created "our secretary general"? That is actually a serious question, and we are only including the proviso that a revision, which is stipulated for every change, requires a two-thirds approval. Revision has won, over many considerations. The Administrative Board should endorse the need to consider all challenges seriously and responsibly, inasmuch as one does not think that the dossiers will all be on an equal footing. Suffice it to say that there are many challenges pertaining to the Metro Union, or rather, to the ramifications that surround the conference itself. Note that a petition to withdraw confidence from the union has been up for signatures for some time.

Compliance With Directives

92AF0566C Tunis LES ANNONCES in Arabic
3 Jan 92 p 9

[Article by [al-Tijan Amarah]: "Where Are UGTT Laws Going?"]

[Text] Because the UGTT [General Union of Tunisian Workers] is an independant, democratic organization and operates in accordance with laws determined by its members, we want it to be a union for workers that defends their interests above and beyond the logic of narrow considerations, settling problems without outside influences and extremist mentality. Democratic practices should be deep-rooted in dealing with problems without compromising solutions, so that the UGTT can perform its assigned role.

Perhaps certain violations which might have occurred in dealing with problems have caused us to raise this question, apart from the legal aspect. They concern legislating conciliatory, "fabricated" solutions.

Where is the UGTT headed?

Guaranteeing the credibility of any organization to its membership clearly comes only from the impression that the upper leadership makes on all the middle echelons in accordance with regulations, so as to guarantee the legitimacy of its movements, follow up problems, and settle them in light of union unity, even though they may differ politically.

The credibility of any organization world is found in its commitment to applying laws to everyone and for everything. This leads us to note the convening of the Provincial Council in Gafsa, whose powers have been based on settling the problems of Gafsa.

No matter that some have tried to delude us and "cover our eyes with a sieve", disputes happen in the largest

organizations and many of them are deep-rooted. In fact, disputes are a healthy phenomenon that expresses the extent of any organization's ability to overcome its differences. Without that ability, the issue might clearly violate the law—Section 62 of the by-laws. We shall not defend this split on that basis, as we are anxious to apply the law. A solution has been reached: to convene a provincial council on 8 January 1992 to solve the problems of the workers' provincial secretary general in Gafsa. His removal was demanded by a group from the provincial Executive Office. It is clear that they are legally supported by a majority of primary unions in Umm al-Ara'is, Redeyef, and Gafsa.

[Amara al-Abbasi] has not yet lost the race, even though his situation appears critical, according to our available information and figures.

We have previously written about this matter and we were accused of bias—without mentioning names. However, we would like to say to those people that we work in accordance with our conscience. We shall not turn away from defending the law when it is violated, and whenever we can, we shall only side with the law.

One could refer to the rumors about the Metro [Union] elections, in which there was extremism, with many excluded from obtaining membership forms, and consequently prevented from participating in the election. That was done on the pretext that the legal deadlines had expired, while membership forms were still being distributed to certain others, even after these deadlines!

The distribution of membership forms began to stir up some problems with the approaching date to renew the structures. Clearly this process is not proceeding as hoped in a number of sectors, since some unions have been told that they must submit membership lists name by name. Since membership dues are paid in advance, no attention has been paid to the fact that there are new members.

Some are linking this process with the political considerations that preceded the election! We don't want to stir up problems by what we say, but some violations have attracted attention. We regret any outside influence on the organization. We think that those who do not respect its independence and the rules of its democratic operation have no place in it.

There is no justification for a policy of appealing to differences. Events, history, and the purges that the UGTT has experienced have shown that it will only increase in strength and steadfastness in the face of those who wish it ill. This can only be on a basis of respect for the basic law, by-laws, and overcoming disputes.

Resolution of Workers' Issues

92AF0566D Tunis LES ANNONCES in Arabic
31 Jan 92 p 8

[Article: "UGTT: Agreement Between President, Workers; Struggles, Gains"]

[Text] Recently UGTT [General Union of Tunisian Workers] activities have been marked by a certain energy, since these activities have been many and varied. Negotiations have continued in several sectors to resolve problems, coinciding with workers' struggles in sectors such as farming and weaving.

This vitality is accompanied by the attainment of several gains; confirmation of that is the achievements in the water sector.

Nationally, the most important event remains the president's meeting with the UGTT Secretary General Ismael Sahbani's, and Sahbani's perception of his excellency's desire to resolve the workers' problems and assist them. In addition, there was the reverberation in labor circles caused by the president's telegram on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the UGTT, especially since the telegram was accompanied by a valuable gift to the workers. This was President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's gift of two plots of land to the UGTT to build the Hechad Institute and UGTT provincial headquarters in Monastir.

Internationally, union activities were marked by Sahbani's meeting with [Francis Belangere], followed by the two of them meeting with the president, in addition to Sahbani's meeting with the Czech minister of labor and social affairs. There was also interest in challenges on the Arab and Maghreb levels.

LES ANNONCES has summarized some of these activities:

National: Harmony Between President, Workers

Once again, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali met with the UGTT secretary general to emphasize the extent of his regard for the UGTT and his willingness to resolve workers' problems, and to praise the UGTT leadership's devotion to ensuring a social climate for the welfare of the country and its people, political stability, and growth.

The president, for the first time in UGTT history, insisted on including it in a noble gesture, which met with unionists' positive reaction. It was the sending of a telegram conveying a very profound meaning to the workers on the anniversary of the UGTT's establishment. The president's custom has been to greet workers on May Day, but on the 46th anniversary, in order to emphasize the position occupied by the UGTT and its role in bolstering the social balance, he sent a long telegram, which has been the object of analysis and the subject of editorials of most daily newspapers and all the weeklies.

The political desire from the summit of power was embodied by the president's gift of two plots of land to the workers, to build the Hechad Institute and one of the UGTT's provincial headquarters.

In this same context, the president met with the UGTT secretary general twice in one week. The first was a

private meeting and lasted more than two hours. On the second occasion, the secretary general was accompanied by Francis Belangere, who was visiting the UGTT and the Union of Arab Maghreb Workers.

Observers of the union scene noted the harmony between the president and the workers, and their partiality to Ben Ali's project against extremism and oppression, whose proponents chose the anniversary of the UGTT's founding to call for rebellion against Sahbani's leadership and for breaking up the UGTT and establishing an alternative organization to defend ****al-Kolnijiyyah**].

International: UGTT Activities

The UGTT headquarters was the venue for several visits. The UGTT secretary general, accompanied by members of the Executive Office, met with 'Abd-al-'Ati al-Ubaydi, Libya's ambassador to Tunisia, and representatives from the Manufacturers' Union to consider the threats and criminal charges to which the Jamahiriyyah is being subjected, preparatory to aggression against it.

The secretary general also met with Fadil Ghurayb, head of the Federation of Iraqi Workers; also in attendance was Kamal Saad, the assistant secretary general for Arab relations and the UGTT representative on the Committee to Break the Blockade Against Iraq.

During this week, the UGTT was also visited by the Czech minister of labor and social affairs and Francis Belangere.

It is also expected that a high-level union delegation, headed by the secretary general of the Spanish Workers' Federation, will visit Tunisia at the beginning of next week.

Union Level: Gains and Struggles

The social initiative continues in sectors such as transport, railroads, farming, and weaving. Because strike dates had been set in some sectors, President Ben Ali's meeting with Sahbani helped reduce tension in those sectors and contributed to clearing the social air.

Union initiative also resulted in several gains. For example, in the water sector, allowances, promotions, and other gains of a social nature were achieved. The past week was also replete with struggles and gains, and it is expected that next week will see even more activity.

Former UGTT Leader Discusses Opposition Status

92AF0554B Tunis LE TEMPS in French 3 Mar 92 p 2

[Interview with former UGTT Secretary General Taseb Baccouche by Mouldi Mbarek, place and date not given. "We Are Witnessing a Relaxation of Tension in Politics"]

[Text] University professor, intellectual, and political figure Taieb Baccouche, who is a former secretary general of the UGTT [Tunisian General Federation of Labor], granted LE TEMPS the following interview in which he responded to a number of questions concerning current events in Tunisia.

[Mbarek] In light of the proposals announced in the president's speech to the Chamber of Deputies at the end of last year and the most recent directives issued by the head of state to the governors with a view to encouraging pluralism, how would you describe the political scene as between the government and the opposition?

[Baccouche] The present political scene at the level of relations between the government and the opposition is characterized by a relaxation of tensions that has been encouraged by initiatives taken by the government to enable the parties to function normally.

These initiatives have created conditions that are propitious for the dialogue that is now taking place concerning important matters such as revision of the electoral code and improvement of the conditions and structures necessary for cooperation both at the national and at the regional levels.

Overcoming the present situation and strengthening the process of dialogue cannot fail to help in the construction of the civilian society.

[Mbarek] Despite the many different presidential initiatives taken with a view to implementing the democratic process, pluralism has not yet been established within the representative institutions. Do you believe the opposition is genuinely participating in the implementation of the democratic process?

[Baccouche] Pluralism is a necessary condition, but it alone is not sufficient to bring about a healthy democratic life. In a country that does not have a long democratic tradition, government has a central role to play in encouraging all initiatives that are designed to educate the masses and thereby develop the civic consciousness of our citizens—the *sine qua non* of all human affairs.

On the other hand, the opposition—a basic element in such a process—cannot fulfill its role unless it rids itself of its "chapel spirit," its devotion to decor, and the lack of a spirit of initiative. That is the price it must pay to improve its credibility in the eyes of the public and of young people in particular.

[Mbarek] The opposition is currently attempting to restructure itself. What do you think of this new endeavor?

[Baccouche] The existing structure of the opposition does in fact need to be reconfigured. That cannot fail to be beneficial for the opposition, for society, and even for the government.

The current discussions do not, in my opinion, deal with the basic problems, because they continue to be characterized by a partisan and egocentric spirit. In this connection, the efforts of certain elements to appropriate Arabism, Islamic Fundamentalism, and democracy itself for their own purposes impede clarification of the political scene, inasmuch as we are increasingly witnessing a descent to the level of slogans that pose as programs.

For my part, I remain convinced that the real cleavage at the present moment is the *de facto* gulf that exists between the supporters of economic liberalism on the one hand and the progressive forces of socialistic and labor-oriented tendencies on the other.

Moreover, it would be dangerous to reduce politics in civilian society to the simple dualism of government versus opposition, for such a dualism poses the risk of marginalizing the nation's active population, which finds its real fulfillment first and foremost in a pluralistic and dynamic associative life that transcends the political cleavages of partisan politics.

[Mbarek] Do you believe a religious party can be authorized in a Muslim country?

[Baccouche] It is universally recognized that political parties are formed on the basis of political programs that relate to the organization of the life of the citizens in the material world, with the aim of providing appropriate solutions to their problems. However, religion is a very important dimension of national identity in the same way as ethnic origin and language and culture in general, and for this reason it cannot be monopolized by any political group that would be tempted to use it as a vehicle for manipulation and for incidental and demagogic political maneuvers.

[Mbarek] We are currently observing a measure of discontent in organized labor in several sectors, including the secondary-school teachers' union. As a former secretary general of the UGTT, how can social peace be preserved and dialogue strengthened among the social partners?

[Baccouche] It should be pointed out that all normal labor union activity is based on effective representation of the rank and file, and on genuine recognition of the rights and duties of all parties concerned.

This can serve to prevent certain misunderstandings that could impair the ability of the social partnership to function.

In this connection, it should be noted that any impairment of the trade-union debate cannot fail to encourage abuses and irresponsibility.

There need not be so much tension in connection with the secondary-school issue, because the principal demands can be resolved through dialogue.

[Mbarek] One final question, Mr. Baccouche. There has been a lot of talk lately about the civilian society. How can that society be promoted and further strengthened?

[Baccouche] The civilian society can be developed through a continuing civic education that covers all areas of social life and develops among citizens the values of tolerance, justice, and equality while raising their consciousness with respect to the factors of national unity and solidarity on the one hand and the factors of individual and collective responsibility on the other.

An associative life, a discussion of ideas that is as extensive as possible, and a healthy and democratic life are factors that favor the expansion and development of the entire civilian society.

Construction Industry Conference Planned

92AF0552A Tunis LE TEMPS in French 29 Feb 92 p 3

[Interview with UNIDO Director-Consultant Gerard Latortue by Mouldi M'Barek; place and date not given: "Traditional Housing Must Be Rehabilitated"]

[Text] Gerard Latortue, director-consultant of UNIDO [United Nations Industrial Development Organization], is currently in Tunisia in connection with preparations for the international conference on the development of the construction industry that will be held in Tunis in May 1993.

Gerard Latortue served as Haitian minister of foreign affairs in 1988, following the fall of Duvalier.

Mr. Latortue agreed to grant us the following interview, in which he answers a number of questions relating to housing problems.

[M'Barek] Your visit is in connection with the preparations for a major conference that will be held in 1993 in Tunis. Could you give us more details concerning this conference and discuss its impact on Tunisia?

[Latortue] The Tunisian Government has just agreed with UNIDO to hold an international conference on the construction industry during the first week of May 1993 in Tunis.

These international conferences are held for the purpose of bringing together all the participants in a particular industrial sector. Because in the present case this particular sector is the construction industry, all the participants from all over the world (the specialists who produce building materials, the private companies, the research engineers, and so forth) will be invited to discuss the subject of the construction industry as it applies to the subsector of housing (including infrastructures and public works).

UNIDO chose Tunisia because it is one of the few developing countries whose performance in the area of

the construction industry is considered to be very successful. Tunisia today produces a very broad range of building materials of a quality comparable to that of the developed countries.

Moreover, the quality seal of approval issued by the Ceramic and Glass Construction Materials Center is recognized by a number of laboratories in Europe, and in particular by the EEC countries.

Similarly, the institutional framework put in place by Tunisia to encourage low-cost housing is regarded as a model to emulate.

Opportunities

At this international conference, representatives of Third World countries will find excellent opportunities in Tunisia to visit the various companies in that sector and meet with their executives.

You are aware that when Third World countries are presented with Western construction models, it leads to a sense of discouragement from the outset because the models from the developed countries appear to the Third World countries to be very sophisticated. The models that derive from the Tunisian experience, however, serve to encourage and motivate the Third World countries.

Moreover, Tunisia has begun to export its building materials, and this conference will enable the Tunisian companies to identify the possibilities for exporting their products to various African, South American, and Asian countries.

[M'Barek] There are a number of participants in the housing sector: the government, the developers, the banks.... How can private enterprise be encouraged to invest in the housing sector?

[Latortue] First of all, the institutional structure can facilitate the success of the private companies. At the outset, Tunisia put in place a housing policy designed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged populations. It should be pointed out that the Tunisian Government has devoted a great part of its own resources to financing programs destined especially for low-cost housing. That has enabled the Tunisian Government today to offer housing to poor families at very low interest rates (5 percent per annum). Tunisia has been able to offer very low interest rates because Tunisian public financing is involved. Countries that depend on foreign funds cannot offer very low interest rates. I must salute the Tunisian performance, which sets an example for all the Third World countries to follow.

Tunisia: A Model for the Third World

Indeed, ever since it became an independent nation Tunisia has accorded great importance to the problem of low-cost housing.

If you are dependent on foreign financing, interest rates are at least 13 percent at the present time. At these high

rates, poor families are unable to acquire housing. This is the nub of the problem currently faced by developing countries that resort to foreign financing.

The Tunisian Government has likewise put in place an excellent institutional framework to encourage housing construction.

On another level, the manufacturers of building materials—thanks to their research programs—have been able to make maximum use of local raw materials.

The Shantytowns

[M'Barek] What about the squatter towns and shantytowns? How can this phenomenon of anarchic housing be combated?

[Latortue] It is difficult to prevent this phenomenon. One of the possible alternatives for combating anarchic housing is undoubtedly decentralization, which enables people to remain in their own regions. It is therefore essential to encourage the construction of relatively low-cost housing. It is likewise necessary to enable companies to find skilled labor outside the capital city. Institutions in the field of housing development should take the lead in making low-cost housing available to the public.

The government should therefore adopt initiatives that should in turn be supported by the private sector, for otherwise we risk seeing all these shantytowns multiply.

It should also be pointed out that in no case should a home cost more than one-third of a family's wages.

Traditional Housing

[M'Barek] There is much talk of rehabilitating traditional housing. How do you think its architectural heritage can be preserved, and should limitations be placed on these huge buildings that are proliferating in certain developed countries?

[Latortue] Housing is part of the cultural framework of a people. It is therefore essential to respect the history, geography, and environment of a country by utilizing local materials, which should be reappraised.

Tunisian ceramics are very attractive and remind us of all of the nation's cultural traditions. For example, we do not need to import ceramics of a neutral color that are very unattractive and not adapted to the environment of the Third World. We should avoid imitating foreign models. The concept of housing is part of a nation's cultural heritage and civilization.

Tunis Air Director Forecasts Company Growth

92AF0552B Tunis LE TEMPS in French 31 Jan 92 p 4

[Article by Zakia Azak: "1992: The Year of Excellence"—first paragraph is LE TEMPS introduction]

[Text] Productivity and quality: two axes of the same program. Opening of a general office for the countries of the Gulf. Actions taken in cooperation with the OTE [European Transportation Organization] to benefit Tunisians living abroad.

Before announcing the forecasts for 1992, Jameleddine Chichti, PDG [president and chief executive officer (CEO)] of Tunis Air, held a press conference at company headquarters during which he evaluated the results for the preceding year, which despite the negative repercussions of the Gulf War are—in the aggregate—satisfactory. This is true, Chichti declared, because for the first time Tunis Air has succeeded in optimizing its capacities and thereby achieving much improved productivity compared with the past.

Let us look first at the balance for 1991. Tunis Air carried a total of 3,340,000 passengers compared to 4,634,000 in 1990, reflecting a drop of 15 percent in regular traffic and 37.9 percent in charter traffic. The decline was 36 percent for the first half of the year before being cut to 9.3 percent in late December. Total revenue was 300 MD [million dinars]. For the year 1991, the IATA [International Air Transport Association] recorded a worldwide loss of approximately \$4 billion for civil aviation transportation (almost the same figure in terms of Tunisian dinars).

Revenue in 1991: 300 MD

The result for last year—which Chichti does not hesitate to call "performing"—is the fruit, he says, of a voluntarist policy for the company's staff and work force. He explained that when faced with the decline in traffic, the company took steps to obtain a better return from its assets and from a continuation of its investment program, which enhanced the productivity of its services. Moreover, the recession has not prevented Tunis Air from continuing its expansion program, which calls for the acquisition between now and 1994 of four new aircraft. Similarly, the general management—convinced that the company's principal resource and trump card is its personnel—has maintained and strengthened the same social program, which consists of guaranteed promotions when due, improved benefits, with the creation of the first center for workers' medicine, and an augmented benefits fund. And in contrast to other sectors, the company has not laid off personnel, it has even hired additional personnel. Chichti estimates that the new Tunis Air headquarters (23,000 m³ completed in a record time of 22 months) contributed to the success of the voluntarist policy pursued in 1991, whose main target is 1992.

The year 1992 is expected to resemble 1991, by maintaining and strengthening the company's performance in terms of cost effectiveness and above all in terms of the quality of its services, notably onboard services. In this regard, Chichti emphasizes that Tunis Air has taken advantage of the off-season to organize—for next February and March—a number of seminars on the results

obtained in the commercial, technical, catering, and developmental areas. This is designed to enable the company to cope successfully with what promises to be a good tourist season, in view of the fact that commitments have already been received from Germany, Austria, Italy, and even Spain, although the French market remains soft.

Moreover, Tunis Air must prepare for the challenges that will come with the establishment of the European single market in 1993 and the ensuing developments, such as deregulation. The company anticipates that the improvement in the quality of its services will enable it during the next five years to increase its revenues by from 25 to 30 percent, at a rate of from 6.5 to 7 percent per year. It is an important objective, when you realize that 80 percent of its revenues are in the form of foreign exchange.

Chichti goes on to say that revenues for 1992 are expected to increase by approximately 80 MD in 1992 and then level off to 70 MD per year. To accomplish this, he says, Tunis Air is counting—as always—on its personnel, who will continue to benefit from the same social policy. He adds, however, that in undertaking new actions—notably the opening of a general office for the countries of the Gulf and the installation of temporary (two to three months) branch facilities in those Tunisian localities many of whose residents live abroad but in which Tunis Air has no representatives—the company will act in cooperation with the OTE to identify the concerned areas.

A Market Under Study

In Eastern Europe—where there is a potential market to be developed—Tunis Air is in the process of testing the market to determine the real demand before deciding whether to establish a presence in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

With respect to sales promotion, an appropriation of 700,000 dinars will be set aside to carry on the same program in concert with the ONTT (National Office of Tourism and Thermal Springs). Here, the object is to review the company's entire marketing policy. A seminar on marketing will be organized.

At the national level, the president-CEO of Tunis Air announced a number of other innovations, including a procedure that in 45 minutes transforms a passenger transport plane into a cargo plane to meet the requirements of exporters. He stated that Tunis Air will not profit by adopting this formula, but is undertaking it nonetheless as a contribution to the current export policy and to eliminate a shortfall of 4,000 tons in cargo-carrying capacity. This experiment will begin with a schedule of three flights per week to Naples, Rome, and Marseilles.

Chichti also stated that the company will immediately undertake preparations for the pilgrimage, explaining that he will go to Jidda for this purpose within the next few days. In conclusion, the president-CEO of Tunis

Air—which holds 48 percent of the capital stock of the private company Tuninter—emphasized that Tuninter is scheduled to begin operating in April. It will provide several flights per day to the principal airports of the nation before branching out to the nearby islands (for example, Malta and Sicily).

WESTERN SAHARA

Mauritanian Describes Conditions at Tindouf

92AF05184 Rabat *L'OPINION* in French
29 Feb 92 pp 1, 7

[Article by Attilio Gaudio: "Account by a Mauritanian Who Escaped From the Polisario Camps"]

[Text] Nouakchott, 28 February—If anyone could possibly still have any doubts concerning the reality of the dramatic situation in the camps at Tindouf and concerning the believability of the ever more numerous and impressive eyewitness accounts by the "Polisario" [Popular (Front) for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro] leaders who have returned to Morocco, this account by a Mauritanian survivor is absolutely unambiguous. In the columns of the newspaper MAURITANIE DEMAIN, he has appealed to the international humanitarian organizations to intervene in order to learn the fate of the Mauritanians who have "disappeared" at Tindouf. I have personally verified the authenticity of his account, and it is not usual to hear the same accusations and the same precise details being voiced in Rabat by persons such as Omar Hadrami and Madame Gajmoula Bent Abbi.

Following are the principal passages from his appeal:

Hundreds of Mauritanians have belonged to "Polisario" at every stage of its struggle, believing that it was their duty to support a "liberation movement," which moreover was being waged by people who were their brothers and neighbors. Only a few months in the ranks of that movement, however, were enough to convince them that the movement is neither revolutionary nor nationalist but in reality totalitarian and chauvinist.

Proof of this is the fact that in 1982, when the political situation had worsened in the camps and in the army because of the successive defeats along the first Moroccan barrier—defeats that resulted in general demoralization and in the flight of the combatants toward Mauritania and the nomadic families toward the "bush" regions of Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania—the Polisario leadership dreamed up a plan for rectifying the situation by scapegoating the Mauritanian militants and combatants who were serving in the Polisario ranks.

The objective of the plan was to arrest the Mauritanians and the Sahraoui complainants, making the former appear as the leaders of a false Franco-Mauritanian network whose objective is to break down the domestic

front and the latter (a total of six Sahraouis) as the leaders of the network recruited in the field, that is to say, in the camps.

All this is designed to get rid of personae non gratae and frighten the demoralized rank and file by means of an unparalleled repression, with a view to inducing the rank and file to follow unquestioningly the directives of the totalitarian leadership.

Hundreds of Mauritians were subsequently arrested and accused of belonging to the aforementioned network which, it is said, is trained by Mauritians at the EMIA [Military Inter-Service School] in Atar and by French officers at the French base in Dakar. We know what followed: tens of persons died under torture—46, according to estimates by Bechir O. Seyid, "Polisario's" strong man—in addition to others who were permanently disabled or disappeared. As for my own case, I was held in an underground military prison, where I was tortured throughout the day. For six months I was suspended from the ceiling from morning to night and at the end of every interrogation was roughed up by torturers wielding whips made of automobile transmission bands. I wanted to kill myself, but I was always tied up with my hands behind my back. This situation went on for five years, and every day I was at death's door.

I got out of prison as a result of the pressure of the popular discontent that in October 1988 shook up not only the Polisario camps but the army as well. One year later I arranged my escape and returned to Mauritania. Tens of my fellow countrymen were dead; others were paralyzed or had disappeared. However, I remember the names of some of the friends I have lost and am asking the Mauritanian press, the Mauritanian League of Human Rights, and the international human rights organizations to conduct investigations of the fate of these missing persons and inform their families in Mauritania of the results of the investigations. The names of these persons are: Teghra O. Babah; Amgarij; Mohamed O. Mohamed; Zehaf Reeyane, known as Demboud; Mohamed Moussa, son of the NDB [expansion not given] qadi; Tachagha-Moussa; Abdel Aziz O. Haidala Leeroussiyine; Bab O. Cheikh T'Labine; Ould Achleichel Terchane; Mohamed O. El-Houssein; Awlad Besbaa; Mohamed O. Lezghame; Wedad O. Lebchir Amgarij; Naji O. Chiekhe-Naji; Teje Kanett; and Mohamed El Mokhtar Taleb Mokhtar.

Reduction of MINURSO Viewed as Logical

92AF0518B Rabat L'OPINION in French 29 Feb 92 p 1

[Editorial by Mohamed Idrissi Kaitouni: "It's Entirely Logical"]

[Text] According to news reports not yet officially confirmed in New York, the UN plans to effect a substantial reduction of its presence in the Moroccan Sahara by reducing the forces it has stationed there within the framework of MINURSO [UN Mission on the Western Sahara Referendum], a part of which can be deployed in

other regions of the world where UN intervention is much in demand and is essential to maintenance of the peace.

In addition to the financial reasons cited and the needs of the other UN operational missions, the circles that are suggesting this possibility believe that the delay in implementing the referendum process is one of the reasons for the partial disengagement by the United Nations.

As is known, this absence of progress in the implementation of the remaining phases of the process cannot be imputed to Morocco, which has demonstrated its good faith by accepting the cease-fire proclamation and agreeing to the deployment of an initial contingent of UN observers.

All the obstacles that have blocked implementation of the UN plan were created by the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro], which is aware that the referendum will confirm the Moroccan identity of the Sahara and put an end to its illusions, its lies, and all the maneuvers whereby it has been able to mislead world public opinion—especially at the United Nations—with the complicity of certain countries that were at one time called "progressive" but now have renounced this label following the disintegration of the communist world and the demise of the cold war era.

Once they were at the site, the UN observers were able to determine that the real situation in no way corresponded to the allegations made by Polisario and by its supporters: that peace and security prevail in the provinces of the Moroccan Sahara; and that there are no forces to "disengage."

The UN observers must have wondered about the expediency of the referendum and its justification, inasmuch as the overwhelming majority of the Sahara populations insist that they are Moroccan and want to remain Moroccan, while the authentic Sahraouis confined at Tindouf make clear their desire to return to the motherland and—when the opportunity presents itself—do not hesitate to flee the "camps of tribulation" and to desert the ranks of the Polisario, which is powerless to stop this hemorrhage of cadres and high-ranking leaders.

There is no question that these people are, after all, merely "refugees" who should be authorized to return to their homes and be reunited with their families in the Moroccan Sahara, or armed bands that can no longer receive the aid formerly supplied by Algeria and therefore should be disarmed. After all, if the misguided individuals among the authentic Sahraouis lay down their arms and announce their desire to get back on the right path, and if the Sahraoui refugees are allowed to return to the motherland, it is entirely logical that the referendum will no longer be necessary and the United Nations can withdraw its observers. The important thing is to dispose of this artificial and anachronistic problem as speedily as possible.

Former Sahrawi Women's Leader on Current Issues

92AF0541A Casablanca AL-ITTIHAD AL-ISHTIRAKI
in Arabic 5 Mar 92 p 2

[Interview With Gajmoula Bent Abbi, former Polisario member, by Boughalib Attar; date and place not given: "So-called Polisario Front Committed Heinous Crimes Against Moroccan People Throughout 16 Years; Abdelaziz Marrakeshi Builds Stately Palace With Humanitarian Aid While Children, Old Men, Women Starve to Death in Camps; Boudiaf Statements Have Disappointed Alleged Front's Hopes, They May Motivate It To Escalate Oppression of Detainees; Referendum Confirms Our Moroccan Identity, Bond to Our History, Forefathers"]

[Text]

[boxed item]

Identity Card

Gajmoula Bent Abbi was born in Laayoune in 1962. In 1975, i.e., before Morocco could restore its Sahara, she was influenced by Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro] propaganda and joined the front's ranks. She continued to work within the alleged front for 10 years. Initially, she worked at the base level and within the women's sector in the Tindouf camps.

Between 1982-1984, she studied political science in Havana at the political school of the Cuban Communist Party, then returned to the Tindouf camps.

In March 1985, she was elected president of the [Western] Saharan Women and was appointed a member of the Polisario Political Bureau in the same year. She continued to shoulder this responsibility until she discharged her anger at the alleged front's leadership and denounced its conduct after giving up her membership in this leadership. She continued to rebel against the Polisario leadership's acts and to condemn its lies until she found the right opportunity to rejoin the motherland.]

AL-ITTIHAD AL-ISHTIRAKI interviewed Mrs. Gajmoula Bent Abbi, former member of the Polisario Front leadership, immediately upon her return from New York. She had just completed a tour that took her to a number of West European countries and the United States to introduce our just cause to several international assemblies, especially the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress. The interview focused on the following three axes:

Axis of Human Rights in Tindouf Camps

[Attar] How are the human rights conditions in the Tindouf camps?

[Abbi] To begin, I want to thank the newspaper of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces for its wish to hold a frank interview, through which I can explain and communicate the conditions under which our brothers in the Tindouf camps live. To answer your question on human rights in these camps, everybody is aware that our Moroccan Saharan brothers have been living in these camps away from their motherland for 16 years, considering that there are also those who departed in 1975. Even in its early years, the so-called Polisario front began to violate the human rights of the Moroccan Saharan citizen. To put it clearly, it can be said that the so-called Polisario front launched, as of that time, a misleading propaganda policy based on deceiving the Moroccan Saharan citizens in the southern region. In addition to this poisoned and suspect policy, the so-called front has been planting fear and terror amidst these citizens, taking advantage of the fact that they are not accurately aware of the true conditions in Morocco. The alleged front has tried to create an anti-Moroccan public opinion, relying on its false and destructive allegations and lies. Thus, it launched its rabid human rights violation campaign. It has exploited the circumstances and has employed the methods previously employed by Spanish colonialism, embracing the policy of 'divide and conquer' and of preventing the Saharan citizens from moving freely to the southern parts of their homeland to familiarize themselves with the real conditions there.

I have said that this alleged front has exploited these conditions and has resorted to all kinds of misleading maneuvers. Thus, a group of citizens were swayed by the front's projections, about which the least that one can say is that they are colonialist in nature. It should be noted that this campaign managed to influence only a minority, especially among the youth. At the same time, the alleged front has committed open crimes against a number of Moroccan Saharan citizens by kidnapping citizens from their homes between October and January 1975 from Laayoune, Es-semara, and [Dakhla]. What is most serious is that the front engaged not only in individual kidnapping but also in group kidnapping in remote desert areas inhabited by Moroccan Saharan bedouin citizens, who lived in tents with their camels and their other belongings. Members of the alleged front attacked these citizens, kidnapped their families, seized their property, and deported them to a barren and rugged area known as Hammada, located on the Moroccan-Algerian border 25 km from Tindouf. Generally, it can be emphasized that the so-called Polisario front has committed heinous crimes against the Moroccan people over 16 years, especially against the southern citizens. These crimes are embodied in arresting and murdering Moroccan Saharan citizens inside their jails after subjecting them to severe, methodical torture. There are, for example, people who have been under arrest since the early years of this brutal campaign until now. There are also people who have spent 10, 14, or 15 years in detention. As a consequence, they have developed permanent physical or psychological disabilities resulting from the severe torture to which they were subjected in

underground prisons in the Tindouf camps, located in Algerian territory. The most heinous crime which the alleged front continues to commit today is its blockading and suppressing of citizens by force and violence. One of the manifestations of this terrible system of suppression is reflected in the deterrent restrictions imposed by the front and embodied in forcing the citizens to continue to live in wornout tents in the Tindouf camps under brutal and inhumane conditions, by which these citizens are denied their most basic rights, be they individual or group rights, such as the right to live in their original homes and native lands and the right to meet with their family members. The children of these families are denied the right to receive necessary medical care or a reasonable education under acceptable conditions. The same applies politically, considering that these citizens are denied the right to free expression.

[Attar] How is torture practiced against detained and imprisoned Moroccan citizens? Does the Polisario employ a special technology in this area? Can you give us exact figures on the number of people detained and imprisoned?

[Abbi] Regarding the first part of the question, it can be said that the Polisario actually possesses terrible technology which it uses to torture detained and imprisoned citizens. Since it was founded, the so-called Polisario formed a security agency specialized in oppressing and pursuing Saharan Moroccans and in watching all their moves and travels, in order to control and dominate them. The so-called Polisario front has also created a covert organization relying on children, women, and old men living in the camps and has formed cells under the pretext of training, organization, or education whereas the main objective of these cells, run by women called "experts" is to establish absolute control over Saharan citizens living in the Tindouf camps and to keep them under direct and close surveillance. Each of these "experts" is required to submit a detailed report on the movements and contacts of all members of the cell or committee with which she is entrusted, and to keep track of these members so that no member will be able to escape the front's clutches. In case any cell member fails to observe the strict directives, he is brought to account and punished.

What is strange is that these cells' "experts" are also responsible, in a very serious manner, for the way the cell members think. They try to control the members' mind and their psyche, in particular. It is one of the experts' duties to control the citizens' mind and intelligence, so as to deprive them of all power of independent thinking and analysis and, consequently, to deny them the freedom to adopt opposing positions. Not even the armed elements who carry out the terrorist operations (against the army) escape these terroristic methods. As part of the intimidating methods employed by the so-called front, there is a central plan applied in all camp districts. To sum it up, this plan demands that every citizen, be he old, young, or sick, report to the district official and respond with the word "here" when his

name is read out. This process is performed regularly every day and nobody is excluded. It is as if one lives in military barracks and has to report his presence, whereas the matter concerns powerless civilians. The objective of this method is to stop whoever contemplates escape and to punish with the severest deterrent measures anybody who fails to report his presence, even if he is old and bedridden. One penalty is to force those punished to make cinder blocks, not to mention other harsh penalties. It is worth noting that in every province there is a police station that includes a women's jail. If a woman refuses to do something because of a sudden ailment, or if she just listens to the Laayoune radio station, she is punished in the district. If the offense is greater, she may be detained at the province's jail. The so-called front employs another method to entice the Moroccan Saharan citizens. It calls this method the "political symposia" and it is embodied in bringing people to specific places and compelling them to recite the front's "general program" and its "principles." If a citizen gets bored with this alleged front and its general plan, if he forgets to recite a part of what he has been instructed to recite, or if he fails to understand something that is asked of him, then the citizen is jailed. Many people were victimized by this practice in 1972, 1977, and 1979. Some of them have spent 10 or 15 years in jail.

When we learn that these jails are underground jails and that their temperatures rise to 50 degrees [Celsius] in the summer and drop below zero in the winter and that they have no water or electricity, then we realize that they are mere graves for the living. Moreover, prisoners are blindfolded and subjected to daily interrogations, coupled with beatings and torture. To justify their positions before the citizens, they force the victims to confess to committing imaginary crimes. In most cases, such prisoners are shot to death without trial. The so-called front arrests and tries people without any controls or accountability. This in regard to the first part of the question is concerned.

As for the second part concerning exact figures on the number of detainees and prisoners, I can say that all the Sahara citizens are prisoners. We find that even the citizens who had been loyal to the Polisario and who then led the 1988 uprising are now opposed to the Polisario, especially the Moroccan inhabitants who came to these camps from the real Moroccan Sahara. Thus, all those who are found in these camps are forced to live in the Algerian Hammada territory. They are all detainees, even though they number 50,000. We should keep in mind that only 20,000 of them came from the Moroccan Sahara. The others are mercenaries brought in from northern Mauritania, northern Mali, and southern Algeria, meaning that their Saharan affiliation is doubtful. The number of Moroccan Saharan citizens who have been detained in jails of the so-called Polisario and who have experienced the harshness of its prisons may be in the thousands, according to one detainee's opinion. The number of Moroccan Saharan citizens executed is estimated at 400. There is also a large

number of Saharan citizens who have suffered permanent physical disabilities, such as blindness, paralysis, and some mental diseases.

[Attar] How are these detainees living under these poor nutritional, health, and educational conditions?

[Abbi] It is well known that the Tindouf camps don't have the minimal essential facilities, such as water and electricity. They are erected in barren territory. Therefore, the natural conditions under which these detainees live are very difficult. As I have already said, temperatures rise to excessive levels in the summer and severe cold prevails in the winter, in a land with no grass, no trees, and no buildings. Moreover, there is no farming and no agricultural resources on which to rely for daily food. This compels thousands of detainees to rely on foreign humanitarian aid as their only source of food. In this regard, the Polisario practices its well-known thefts. It claims before international humanitarian organizations that there are 150,000 "refugees." But as we have already said, the number does not exceed 50,000. When this aid is delivered for the women, children, and old men, more than half disappears, being sold either at Algiers Port or through special networks set up by the alleged front, which divert the revenues to their members' foreign bank accounts. The alleged front allocates the other part of the aid to serve the objectives of its foreign propaganda policy, which is aimed at influencing the citizens of Mauritania and Mali who suffer from starvation and drought.

It is worth noting that Abdelaziz Marrakechi, leader of the so-called front, has built a stately palace in Tindouf and has supplied it with the best and latest furnishings. Moreover, the other front members have accumulated vast fortunes, thanks to their income from foreign humanitarian aid. On the other hand, the detainees are starving, since there is a shortage of essential food supplies, such as flour, oil, sugar, and infant formula. At the health care level, the detainees lack the minimal essential clinical means, due to the lack of hospitals and modern medical equipment, and also due to the lack of capable and specialized medical cadres. I recall that during the first years of the life of the alleged front, hundreds of children and women died of plain and simple diseases, such as diarrhea and measles. If people develop serious ailments, they are taken to Tindouf Hospital, which is a small hospital that also suffers from miserable medical conditions. Meanwhile, the educational sector is in a very poor condition in terms of both content and form. Even though there are so-called schools in the Tindouf camps, their standard is low and their resources are limited. What is more serious in the tendencies of the educational policies embraced by the alleged front is the front's adoption of a "stultification" plan that is embodied clearly in preventing 14-year and 15-year-old students from continuing their secondary and college education, that is, if some of the students are lucky enough to continue their education until this age in Algerian or Cuban schools. I say that when male and female students reach this phase, they are prevented

from continuing their education, even if they haven't failed their studies. Students are conscripted in implementation of the alleged front's decree calling for maintaining a healthy balance in the army. Thus, the rash acts of the alleged front's leaders claim hundreds of children as their victims. This is insofar as male students are concerned. As for female students, they are forced to marry members from the camps in order to promote propagation. The main objective of this policy, which is built on illusions, is to impose this type of hard labor on the Saharan Moroccans living in the camps and to enable the front to try to survive as a so-called movement, as a name, and as a leadership.

[Attar] As a former official in charge of the Saharan Women's Union, can you tell us about the conditions of the women detained in the Tindouf camps?

[Abbi] Women are the ones harmed most by the tragic situation under which our brothers, the detainees in the Tindouf camps, live. Why this injustice? Because women's position enables the alleged leadership to exploit them and not to give them proper consideration. Moreover, most of the programs and achievements accomplished by the alleged front at the political, propaganda, and social levels have been made with the sweat of the brow of the women in the Tindouf camps. Women are the ones who make the pottery products and traditional mats that the so-called front uses for propaganda. Women are the only truth that continues to exist in the Tindouf camps. Thanks to their effort, the so-called front has acquired large-scale aid and backing. Yet, women continue to suffer two-edged hardship. On the one hand, they work beyond their capacity under very difficult conditions and limited resources, in addition to their housework, and they are unable to do anything about their tragic situation. On the other hand, we find that women are the primary victim of the suppression machine used against the Saharan citizens living in the Tindouf camps. Women are compelled to stay in their camps and are prevented from moving from camp to camp. In some cases, a woman is even prevented from wearing a dress she has chosen or has purchased because she likes it. The front imposes a certain traditional dress code on her, i.e., the front is not reluctant to interfere in the citizen's private life. Moreover, women are subjected to polygamy and are forced to marry men who are already married. They are also forced to consent against their will to their husbands' marriage to other women. They don't have any right to denounce this coercive imposition. If they rebel, they are subject to imprisonment. When demonstrations were organized in 1988 to demand reunification with the motherland and release of freedoms, the Polisario suppressed this protest movement by beating and assaulting women. Consequently, many women suffered from abortion because of the torture to which they were subjected. In the early years, the army of the so-called front took part in attacks against the Moroccan soil and kidnapped women from Tan-Tan, Tata, and Zag and executed them in [Hammat Rabouni].

Axis of Moroccan Sahara Issue

[Attar] What is your assessment of Boudiaf's recent statements on liquidating the Sahara dossier and what are the reactions of the so-called Polisario?

[Abbi] I consider Algerian President Boudiaf's statements to be extremely important, considering that they have been made under a political circumstance that coincides with a critical phase through which the Sahara dossier, which may be nearing its end, is going. What makes these statements even more significant is that they are made by an Algerian leader. I find that these statements embody the Algerian consensus on the need to close the Moroccan Sahara dossier. All factions, tendencies, and parties of Algerian public opinion agree on the Sahara issue, which they feel constitutes a source of numerous political, economic, and social problems and crises that have shaken Algeria, and that have infringed upon the structure of the Arab Maghreb in general. Therefore, President Boudiaf's statements are a clear reflection of an Algerian opinion and viewpoint on solving this problem for once and for all. Moreover, these statements are characterized by a political realism that merits applause. This is because the statements do not speak of the presence of a real political problem or of a people, a state, or anything of the kind. They don't speak of the independence of this so-called people, and so forth. These statements harbor a true political content when they express the opinion that the matter concerns armed elements on Algerian soil. The gist of what I have understood from these statements is that the Sahara problem is a problem that must be settled promptly, that the blockade imposed on the detainees and the imprisoned must be lifted, and that they must be permitted to return to their native soil and homeland. I say here that it is in Algeria's interest to end this problem and to strengthen its relations with the Kingdom of Morocco. Of course, this will not happen unless Algeria takes a historic and courageous position on the Sahara issue. Algeria is well-aware that the detainees and prisoners in the Tindouf camps are Moroccan citizens who are subjected to a blockade imposed on them by a band of members of the so-called Polisario, who show no respect for human rights on Algerian soil. This is why the Algerian Government shoulders an immense responsibility toward the Moroccan citizens and toward the Sahara. As a Moroccan citizen, and as a former member of the Polisario, I cannot but feel satisfied with a decision that would end the numerous tragedies that have long been experienced by our detained brothers and that have drowned us in numerous problems. Were it not for the rashness and irresponsibility of some members of the so-called front, these tragedies could have been avoided and the efforts could have been channeled toward the good of the Maghreb citizens. In this regard, I say that if the Algerian Government were well-informed of what goes on in the Tindouf camps, these statements would have been made earlier.

The truth is that the Algerian Army encourages the alleged front to stay in power and supports it with all

means. Moreover, when the Tindouf detainees demonstrated in October 1988, the Algerian Army took part in suppressing them and in torturing them in Hammat Rabouni. When Polisario members leave Algeria, they use Algerian passports. Thus, there is such a firm tie between the Polisario and the Algerian Army that the front is nothing more than a child delivered and nurtured by Algeria to defend its interests and to create problems for Morocco. All this is true. However, what I want to say is that not all members of the Algerian Government are fully aware of what goes on in the Tindouf camps. Some of these members are content to learn about what goes on in this part of Algeria through false reports that have nothing to do with the truth and that are supplied to them by the Algerian Army. If these members knew the true nature of what goes on in the Tindouf camps, they would have opened the borders long ago and would have allowed detained Moroccans to return to their homeland. Therefore, these statements must be followed by firm and clear action to break the blockade imposed on the detainees and to put pressure on the Polisario members to end this myth.

[Attar] What are the reactions of the so-called Polisario in wake of Algerian President Boudiaf's statements?

[Abbi] The so-called Polisario believes that the Sahara problem is not the Algerian people's and parties' problem, but the Algerian Government's problem. Therefore, this government can proclaim an end to the Sahara problem and can abandon the Polisario at any moment. To make things clearer, the Polisario leadership members are afraid that the Algerian Government will confront them with a *fait accompli* and tell them: Enough destruction and confusion. As for the detainees in the Tindouf camps, Boudiaf's statements have brought them satisfaction, joy, and optimism, because they feel that the hour of deliverance has neared. But as a Moroccan Saharan citizen, I fear that the criminals of the so-called front, who have no fear of God and no conscience, will escalate their suppression of the Tindouf camps. This is what makes me reaffirm that Algeria is responsible for returning the Sahara dossier to its original historical course by lifting the blockade imposed on the detainees and by curbing the Polisario criminals, especially since they have claimed, at public rallies held in the Tindouf camps in wake of Boudiaf's statements, that Algeria cannot abandon the Polisario, that it has always supported the Polisario members, and that these members should have no fears whatsoever.

[Attar] How do you see the process for a referendum in the Moroccan Sahara?

[Abbi] Arranging for a referendum in the Moroccan Sahara reflects a Moroccan stance, which his majesty the king defended strongly at the United Nations in the early period of 1964-1967, when Spain was still occupying the Sahara. His majesty also defended this decision in Nairobi (on 1 February) 1981. Thus, Morocco has always been a pioneer defender of the referendum. As for

the so-called Polisario, it has always opposed a referendum, because it is certain that its outcome would be against its wishes. Morocco insists on this referendum because of its democratic tendencies, because of the international support this tendency enjoys, and because this tendency gives the Saharan people the opportunity to express their affiliation with Morocco and the affiliation of the Saharan causes with the Alawite throne, clearly and explicitly.

Therefore, I find that a referendum will reaffirm the Moroccan identity of the Sahara and of the Saharan people. Morocco's position is courageous and daring, whereas the Polisario position is weak and intransigent and will lead to creating problems in the face of the referendum and of the process. What makes things worse is that the alleged front contradicts itself. In the early years, the front alleged that the Sahara population was 1 million people, whereas it says now that the number of those who are entitled to vote does not exceed 70,000. This position has motivated numerous countries supporting the front to withdraw their support for it and to consider it irresponsible. The latest statements by the alleged front's defense and foreign ministers provide decisive proof of the front's rashness and decline. They have asserted that the referendum must be conducted in the manner which the Polisario sees fit, and that if the referendum outcome does not preserve the Polisario, then it will be futile and, consequently, the war against Morocco will have to be resumed. This is a position that bespeaks of anti-peace violence. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, it must be said that the Polisario is preparing, in its own way, for the referendum under internal circumstances that are embodied in the widespread phenomenon of divisions within its ranks, and in the return of many of its cadres to Morocco and their abandonment of the front. Moreover, the current international circumstances do not help the Polisario, considering that the world is seeking greater and greater unity and that it denounces the creation of entities that have no regional or international significance. As the Saharan people, we can only view this referendum as a reaffirmation of our Moroccan character, our identity, and our history. This referendum will also reaffirm our belonging to our forefathers, who had historical relations and true bonds with the Moroccan people.

Axis of Foreign Activity of the Repatriated

[Attar] Within what framework does your recent tour of West Europe and the United States fall, and what is its outcome?

[Abbi] The tour that I made recently, as part of a delegation of repatriated Saharan people, falls within the framework of familiarizing world public opinion with the real conditions in the Tindouf camps and of acquainting it with the real internal conditions of the so-called Polisario. Public opinion is only aware of the propaganda aspect of the Polisario myth. This is what has motivated us to focus mostly on the open human rights violations committed by Polisario members

against our brothers in Tindouf. This tour has taken us to Europe. I, for example, went to Switzerland, where I visited Geneva and Berne. We have also visited the European Parliament in Paris and met with numerous parliamentary and media figures; and with some humanitarian organizations, parties, and women's organizations. The outcome has been very positive. In all these circles, we have felt a profound understanding of the humanitarian problem in the Tindouf camps, solidarity with our brothers detained there, and support for their repatriation. We coordinated with several parliamentary figures and met with a European parliamentary committee to create a committee for reunification of the Moroccan Saharan people. In the United States, we held coordination meetings with the UN ambassadors of numerous countries, such as the United States, France, Ecuador, Venezuela, Spain, Hungary, Mexico, Germany, Britain, and others. Those were very important meetings, in which we explained our position clearly and objectively.

[Attar] What is the objective of creating a committee for reuniting Moroccan families of Saharan origin, and what reverberations has this development had internationally and at the level of the Tindouf camps?

[Abbi] The goal behind forming this committee is to create within the European Parliament a force that defends Morocco's interests and, theoretically, the interests of the Moroccan Saharan people, especially since we know that the Polisario has a similar committee that defends its interests. But the latest developments have diminished the Polisario's presence and eliminated its credibility altogether, because it has been supplying the European Parliament with groundless lies and allegations. Our committee's basic objectives include lifting the blockade imposed on our Saharan brothers in the Tindouf camps. This committee includes parliamentary figures from Spain, France, Germany, and several other countries. It will exert serious and ceaseless efforts. The committee's initial positive results have begun to surface, now that the committee's European members have acknowledged that they are reviewing the Sahara dossier with a new, realistic look. The steps that this European committee will take include putting pressure on the Polisario leadership to release the Moroccan Saharan families so they can return to their homeland. This committee has received a number of letters from repatriated members and from other families requesting that the blockade imposed on the families detained in the Tindouf camps be lifted. As for the reverberations, they have been very significant, whether at the parliamentary level or the international level. This is what we felt at the meetings we held with the [UN] ambassadors of European and Latin American countries. At the level of the Tindouf camps, news of the creation of this committee has been received with great satisfaction, because the camps know now that their issue is no longer buried and that the entire world stands with their just cause—Repatriation so that an end can thus be put to all the

phases of tragedy: arrest, detention, suppression, starvation, and all woes from which the camps have suffered since the criminal front was established.

Sahrawi Tribes 'Support' Moroccan Saharan Claim

92AF0628C Casablanca MAROC SOIR in French
7-8 Mar 92 p 1

[Text] In a report broadcast Thursday evening, a news team on special assignment for the French television station Antenne 2 stated that the Sahrawi tribes of Morocco "by a large majority, express the view that this territory should be a part of the Kingdom of Morocco."

In the course of this live report, Gerard Beauflis noted that the "dahirs [royal decrees], acts of allegiance to the king attest that these populations have been present on this land for centuries."

On the subject of voter registration requirements, the Antenne 2 reporter mentioned that the tribes, "after being driven out by harsh climatic conditions or colonialism, are now returning to settle in the desert."

"Nothing and no-one can stand in the way. In any event, all of this is written in the mists of time," he remarked.

In the same report, Antenne 2 noted that Moulay Ali has returned to Morocco after 18 years in the camps of Tindouf. The Izarguyn tribe "has taken pride in the return of the prodigal son." "The son of a hero in the resistance against the Spanish occupier," the report adds, "as seen in images of the festivities held five days ago by the tribe to celebrate his return. [quotation marks as published]"

Moulay Ali, who spent 10 years in the jails of the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro] for dissidence, told Antenne 2 that "the revolt, the tribalism, the injustice, and the repression that took place in the camps of Tindouf truly appalled us, and all the young people were demoralized."

Moulay Ali, who left his wife and two children in the hands of the Polisario, "is now discovering a new reality, which is that the Sahrawi tribes of Morocco, by a large majority, express the view that this territory should be part of the Moroccan kingdom," noted Antenne 2.

Sahrawis Report Torture, Food Shortages in Camps

92AF0628A Casablanca MAROC SOIR in French
10 Mar 92 p 1,4

[First paragraph is MAROC SOIR introduction]

[Text] The fraying of the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro]: More defections to Morocco. "Food and medications have run out, while repression and torture are a daily occurrence for those confined in the camps."

Rabat, (MAP)—A group of Sahrawis who recently returned to the motherland in response to the king's appeal ("The homeland is clement and merciful") reported that the economic and political situation in the camps at Tindouf is extremely dangerous.

The members of this group are: Omar Loubla Mohamed Ould Khatri, a former supervisor in central supply operations; Al-Haidab Bamba Ould Ahmed, responsible for students and pupils of the Polisario in Spain; Farik Mohamed Ould Ibrahim, responsible for security in one military zone of the camps, and his wife, Mrs. Al-Alem Taslem Bint Sidi Ahmed. They state that the Sahrawis confined in the camps are living in disastrous economic conditions. They are suffering from a glaring lack of food and medications that "the Polisario's ruling circle" diverts from aid shipments for their own personal use.

These former members of the Polisario affirmed that those being held against their will in the camps are also subjected to torture and repression practiced indiscriminately against men, women, children, and the elderly.

The Polisario's ruling circle is directly controlled by Algeria from which it takes its orders, they stated, adding that Algerian officers work in the Polisario's "Defense Ministry" and security forces.

They went on to state that Algeria commands and supports the Polisario and manages all of its affairs; and that the outcome of every problem depends upon Algiers. Algerian-born officials of the Polisario, they pointed out, are the ones who are holding the camps' residents under siege, ensuring that they do not return to Morocco.

In political matters, they stated that the Polisario's views are no longer believed by the camps' residents who discovered they had been the victims of propaganda and false promises, the motives of which have been exposed to the light of day; the present concern of the camps' residents is to find a way to return to the motherland in response to the royal appeal: "The homeland is clement and merciful."

Seven other former members of the Polisario have recently returned to Morocco, it was reported by the daily newspaper L'OPINION on Monday.

They are Ibrahim Baba Amr, Mohamed Barek Allah Omar, Salah Abdallah Achin, Abdessamad Abdallah Zaghm, Sidi Mohamed Lahbib, Ahmed Yacoub, and Mohamed Khatri Omar, who either held military positions in the Polisario or led political activities in the Lahmada camps, according to the report.

In statements quoted by L'OPINION, these seven ex-members of the Polisario affirmed in particular that the "situation in Tindouf has reached a high point of tension, because the population is now aware of having been misled from the outset and because of the dictatorial behavior of the Polisario's leaders—of those remaining, at least—whose behavior is characterized by injustice, exploitation, and the use of innocent people to attract

international humanitarian aid which they divert to serve their personal interests."

Creation of Sahrawi State Said 'Impossible'

92AF0628B Casablanca MAROC SOIR in French
14-15 Mar 92 pp 1,3

[First paragraph is MAROC SOIR introduction]

[Text] A former Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Sagui el Hamra and Rio de Oro] official declares that for those who have lost their way, the only solution is to rally to their country of origin.

Rabat, (MAP)—A Sahrawi state would be impossible to create because it would have no economic or social foundation, said Mr. Mohamed Saleh Tamek, a former official for internal organization of the so-called Polisario, in an interview with the Saudi publication EL YAMAMA.

From an economic point of view, he said, such an entity would lack the infrastructure of a modern state, unless it were a province attached to a foreign state outside the area, but that is not the wish of the Sahrawi people.

From the social standpoint, a Sahrawi state would experience conflicts between tribes, some of which are accustomed to a good standard of living, particularly those who have returned to the motherland.

For Mr. Mohamed Saleh, the Sahrawi people have no other solution but to join a larger grouping such as Morocco to which they are bound by historic, religious, and linguistic ties and by allegiance. Even the Maliki rite of Islam practiced in Morocco is predominant throughout the Sahara, and the majority of Sahrawi tribes have roots in the northern regions of Morocco, Mr. Tamek emphasized.

He also pointed out that the Polisario agreed to the principle of a referendum because it felt pressured to do

so by the changes that have swept through the world, knowing all the while that it will lose this gamble. He noted that several countries have revised their positions regarding the Polisario and that some have even revoked their recognition of it.

He revealed that the Polisario's acceptance of the referendum caused internal rifts and differences to emerge and departure of more than 500 military officers.

Mr. Tamek added that the Sahrawis are hoping for a rapid solution so that they may begin their construction effort and avoid falling farther behind the other regions of the Arab Maghreb, which is united by its civilization, culture, and economy.

Regarding the arrangements for a referendum, he does not hold Morocco responsible in any way for the delay in voting, and attributes certain obstacles to the United Nations which, he said, has been unable to organize a referendum within the time frame initially planned. But, he contended, the referendum must take place next summer, noting that the Sahrawis who have returned to Morocco are eager to see Morocco's natural borders recognized internationally.

Questioned about the Polisario's sources of charitable aid, Mr. Tamek said that they were self-described humanitarian organizations and extremist organizations such as former communist organizations and Green Parties that are aiding the Polisario, whether in good or bad faith. He noted that Libya stopped supporting the Polisario in 1984 and that it now refuses to grant entry to the mercenaries' students.

As to the Polisario's internal state of affairs, Mr. Tamek noted the difficulty of speaking in detail about it, given the new developments in Algeria where a state of emergency has been imposed. But, he remarked, the Polisario is betting that the climate of tension in the region will continue, while it had counted on the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the past.

BANGLADESH

Japan Said To Drag Feet on Jamuna Bridge Project

92AS0797A Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English
30 Jan 92 pp 1, 8

[Text] Despite all our complacency about the early start of the implementation work of the prestigious 528 million dollar Jamuna multi-purpose bridge, it is being delayed largely due to certain financial snags.

Of the three principal donors to this gigantic project, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have given firm pledge of their commitments. But Japan is understood to be dilly-dallying with her commitment.

The three donors originally pledged 150 million dollars each and the rest of the amount was supposed to be provided by the Government of Bangladesh.

It is believed Japan is procrastinating her financial commitment mainly because of the present government's move to revise Karnafuli Fertilizer Company (KAFCO) agreement considered to be highly unfavourable to Bangladesh. The KAFCO agreement in which Japan holds 33 per cent of the shares concluded by the previous autocratic regime highly favourable to Japan.

Japan is opposing tooth and nail the revision of the KAFCO agreement on the ground that the present government is a successor government and, therefore, it should abide by the previous government's agreement.

Although Japan will not say in so many words that she is delaying its financial commitment for the Jamuna bridge because of that, it is generally understood that Japan has tagged the former with her commitment for the latter.

The Vice-Chairman of the Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Authority, however, told THE NEW NATION that nowhere did Japan indicate that. On the contrary Japanese Government was very closely associated with the project right from its outset and evinced keen interest in the early implementation of the project.

He further went on to add that the Government of Bangladesh has taken the initiative to rope in Japan with her financial commitment to the project. He said, our Ambassador to Japan has taken up the matter with the Japanese authorities and hopeful result is awaited shortly.

The Vice-Chairman appears hopeful about the start of the project in about three to four months, and it will take about five years to complete it.

The Vice-Chairman, Mr. Azimuiddin, appears too optimistic about the start of the implementation work of the project. Observers, however, believe Tokyo may not release the fund, unless and until it receives its pound of

flesh from KAFCO project. Under compelling circumstances the Government may have to succumb to Japanese pressure.

Papers Report Visit of Thai Crown Prince

92AS0796A Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER
in English 17 Jan 92 pp 1, 10

[Text] Thai Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn on Thursday lauded the cooperation at different levels between the country and Bangladesh, saying both nations have gained a "great deal" of mutual benefits from this relationship, reports BSS [Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha].

Replying to the toast at a banquet hosted in his honour by President Abdur Rahman Biswar at the Bangladesh, he said such cooperation, based on a continuous coordination and mutual advantages, had resulted in a mutual good understanding and friendship.

The Prince, who arrived in Dhaka on Thursday on a six-day state visit, said the cooperation also stemmed from mutual respect for the proper dignity of each other, both in public and private sectors. Prince Vajiralongkorn said Bangladesh and Thailand had indeed long enjoyed friendly relations even before diplomatic ties were officially established in 1972.

Friendship and mutual goodwill have become increasingly consolidated all the time until it could be confidently said that the two countries and their peoples have communicated with the highest degree of smoothness, closeness and sincerity, he said.

Turning to Bangladesh, the Thai Prince said during many passing years up to now, the Thai people have watched with interest the continuous progress and prosperity of this country and added that his country clearly admired the progress.

The great efforts and firm determination of the people of Bangladesh to undertake every kind of sacrifice and activity for the sake of motherland are admireable, the Prince said.

"Besides we also feel highly confident that under the guidance of Your Excellency and the present leaders, the People's Republic of Bangladesh will [be] able to meet with flourishing success in all fields he observed.

Earlier President Abdur Rahman Biswar said Bangladesh was looking forward to a meaningful cooperation with Thailand in its quest for development.

Speaking at a banquet, he said both the countries already had necessary institutional structures for cooperation in the form of agreements and a joint commission.[sentence as published]

The President said the present government of Bangladesh was adopting wide-ranging measures for bringing about social and economic progress to achieve economic self-reliance.

Turning to the bilateral relations between the two countries, the President said it had got impetus when Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman visited Thailand in 1979. "Your present visit has further consolidated the relations between our two countries," he said.

Extending his warmest welcome to the Thai Crown Prince and the members of the Royal entourage, at the banquet, President Biswar recalled the visit of the Thai King and the Queen three decades ago to Dhaka and hoped the present visit of the Thai Crown would strengthen the existing bonds of friendship between Bangladesh and Thailand.

Appreciating the dynamic economic progress achieved by Thailand, President Biswar said the royal leadership had inspired the Thais with a sense of purpose, direction, dignity and commitment. "As friends, your success fills us with pride and as neighbours, we look forward to learning from your experience," he said.

Calls on President

Earlier the visiting Crown Prince of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn called on President Abdur Rahman Biswar at Bangabhaban Thursday evening.

They discussed matters relating to industrial, economic and joint venture programmes which could be taken by the two countries for their mutual benefits.

The Crown Prince expressed his optimism about the economic prosperity of Bangladesh because of the skilled manpower. This skill, he said, would contribute immensely in the economic growth and other developments of the country.

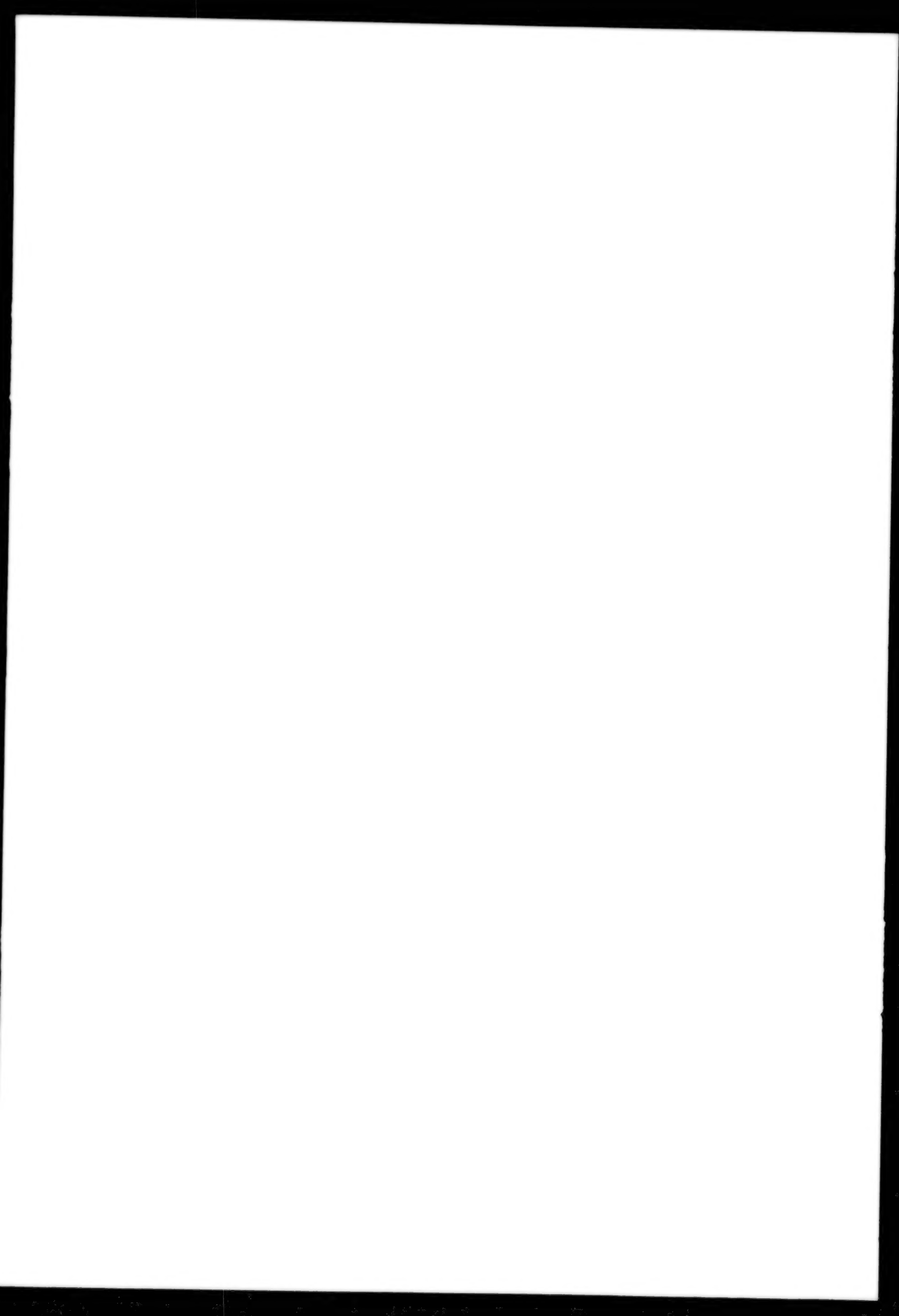
The Crown Prince said, as almost a neighbour, Bangladesh and Thailand have close cooperation in different fields. He said, joint collaboration in industrial sector would take place as the two countries have lots of similarities.

He lauded the rich culture of Bangladesh and hoped that the relationships between the two countries would be strengthened in the future.

Reciprocating the sentiment, President Biswar said that steps to generate the country's economic growth had already been taken by the newly elected government. Bangladesh considered Thailand as a near neighbour and a very friendly country, he said and added its moral support and high experience in economic development would be useful for Bangladesh.

He expressed his confidence that the existing friendly relations between the two countries would be further strengthened. The President appreciated the steady growth of Thailand's economy and said Bangladesh might be greatly benefited from its experience. He also said the current visit of the Thai Crown Prince would further strengthen the two country's relations.

During the call on the Thai Deputy Prime Minister Michai Ruchupan, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mustafizur Rahman, Minister of planning Zahiruddin Khan, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman, secretary to the President A.M. Yusuf and Thai Ambassador in Bangladesh Vicai Vannasin were present.



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